

[July 2, 2000]

"Yup, I gotta confess, that picture of a U.S. Marshal pointing an automatic weapon toward Donato Dalrymple and ordering him in the name of the U.S. Government to turn over Elián González warmed my heart. They should put that picture up in every visa line in every U.S. Consulate, with: 'America is a country where the rule of law rules. This picture illustrates what happens to those who defy the rule of law and how far our government and people will go to preserve it. Come all ye who understand that.'"

-- Thomas Friedman, *New York Times*, April 25, 2000

In the pre-dawn hours of April 22, 2000, agents from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the U.S. Marshals broke down the door of Miami resident Lazaro González, seized González's 6 year old great-nephew, Elián, at gunpoint, and spirited him to Andrews Air Force Base to be reunited with his father, Juan Miguel González-Quintana. On June 28, Elián, Juan Miguel, his wife, their son, and a cousin boarded a jet to Havana – a stunning and extraordinary victory for Cuba's dictator Fidel Castro.

The December 7, 1999 *Miami Herald* reported that the Clinton Administration first rejected Castro's demands to send Elián back after he was found floating in an inner tube off the Florida coast, one of only 3 survivors of a boating wreck in which his mother, Elizabet, drowned. But, as the world knows, Bubba quickly changed his tune. After the raid, Clinton asserted "every conceivable alternative was tried", when, in fact, none were. Given that Clinton blames his failure to win re-election as Arkansas's governor on Jimmy Carter's Mariel boatlift, it's little wonder he couldn't be bothered to look for "every conceivable alternative"!

Although negotiations over how/when to transfer Elián were on-going when the raid took place, Attorney General Janet Reno justified the action citing the "rule of law" had to be upheld. What law was she upholding? Who told her guns were in the house (a charge later proven false)? Why did she secure a search warrant when search warrants are issued for objects, and when even microbes on Mars knew where Elián was? Why did the INS revoke Elián's visa without due process, allowing Reno to arrest him for being an illegal alien? Why didn't she secure a custody order from the judge presiding over the case instead of going to a low-level magistrate 10 hours before the raid to sign the warrant, an act Harvard Law Professor and Clinton booster Lawrence Tribe wrote in the April 23 *New York Times* "shakes the very safeguards of liberty"? None of these were asked by the press, who were only too willing to accept Reno's spin. The fact was the law was not on her side and she knew it.

United States immigration laws clearly provides that "any alien" is entitled to a full, evidentiary asylum hearing, irrespective of his or her status. In its April 19, 2000 decision, the 11th Circuit Court noted a couple of cases, including that of a four-year-old, in which the child's interests overrode those of a parent, and cited the INS's rule book, which notes when the interests of parent and child conflict, the official in charge "will have to come to a decision as to the well-foundedness of the minor's fear on the basis of all known circumstances, which may call for a liberal application of the benefit of the doubt." The INS can issue a no-exit order for any alien. It could have mandated Elián stay in the U.S. by the very same authority under which it mandated he be returned to Cuba. However, the INS's role in the matter was eliminated by the Court's decision to grant Elián temporary legal status.

The fact that Elián is a minor didn't mandate he be returned to his father, since the law anticipates Juan Miguel can speak for Elián only if it was assumed he was not under duress from the Cuban Government, and that Elizabet did not die in a situation that indicated her desires as to the ultimate residence of the child. The circumstances of Elizabet's death made her intentions clear, while Juan Miguel and his family had their every move monitored and orchestrated by Castro. Thus, Clinton's and Reno's assertions that Elián had to be returned to Cuba to "uphold the rule of law" is a refutation of what federal law - and the INS's own rules and regulations - actually say!

Whether Juan Miguel was Castro's patsy or acting under his own free will (!), the question remains: why didn't he hop on the next plane to Miami once he learned Elián was safe? Instead of raving to Ted Koppel about how Elián was being held "hostage", why didn't he "rescue" Elián himself instead of waiting 5 whole months for Reno to do it for him? And why did he not only allow a SWAT team to stage a military-style assault on his son, but, according to the April 25 New York Times, demanded it? And all the while, the press screamed about how this "loving father" was being denied his "parental rights"!

However, under U.S. immigration laws, he had next to no "parental rights," since the laws applies to legitimate children: Elián was born AFTER Juan Miguel divorced Elizabet. Had the case proceeded in the Florida Family Courts where it belonged, he would have most likely lost. But the upshot is the González family may not have prevailed, either, as Elián was transferred at sea to the Coast Guard by the two men who found him. That means, unlike the two other survivors, he didn't make it to shore on his own, and under a 1995 migration accord with Cuba, would have likely been deported within 48 hours. However, INS did not follow procedure and released Elián to Lazaro at the hospital the Coast Guard had taken the boy to instead of placing him at a facility until his status could be resolved. INS officials told reporters they nor the State Department had no legal say in the matter -- until Castro started throwing his hissy fit.

Of course, the Clinton/Reno/Castro cabal couldn't have pulled this off without the shameless sycophants which comprise the mainstream media. Seeing how a Los Angeles Times poll found that 90% of reporters voted for Clinton in 1992 - in stark contrast to an electorate that never gave him more than 49% of the vote - the "spin" was in. After the raid, the media lobbed zingers at the González family and the Miami Cubans to smugly justify their narrow world-view. "If Elián's Miami relatives had cared about the boy's welfare, they would have sent him back to his father weeks ago", the St. Petersburg Times huffed. CNN, the Associated Press, and eight other Castro-friendly outlets were given the OK by Clinton to open offices in Cuba. Castro also rewarded the Chicago Tribune and the Dallas Morning News with Havana bureaus. Coincidence? Hardly.

Clinton/Reno/Castro then went into overdrive to spin the photo of a scared shitless Elián being grabbed by an armed commando. Rather than having the image perceived in political terms (or, worse, Bubba doing Fidel's bidding), Clinton/Reno/Castro sought to have the photo seen as an effort to reunite an "abused" boy with his father, rather than portraying the commandos as what they really were: boot jacked thugs dishing out their own form of abuse. Reno said: "I asked myself: How would [Elián] feel, suddenly being put in the arms of a stranger? What would he think? How frightened would he be? And I kept thinking, 'I wish I could see him when his daddy gets on the plane'". The country's major papers did not run the Elián-meets-the-Commando photo, but, instead, ran pieces which encouraged the public to see the photo from Reno's perspective. TIME ran a photo of a smiling Elián with an arm around a beaming Juan Miguel on its May 1 cover: "Papa"! The pictures of the post raid Elián were taken by Castro's - uh, sorry, Juan Miguel's - lawyer, Greg Craig, who had faxed media outlets asking them not to cover the raid in the name of "decency."

For all of Reno's embracing freedom of the press - even claiming she refused to have Alan Diaz, whose Elián-meets-the-Commando photo won him the Pulitzer Prize, kicked out of the González home to "avoid allegations of a cover-up" - the media was allowed ZERO ACCESS to Elián. Oddly, the media never complained. Nor did it complain when Senator Bob Smith, escorting the Gonzálezes, was turned away from Andrews Air Force Base (under what law can a Congressmen be barred from a military base)? Elián was surrounded by "diplomats" from the moment he arrived at Andrews. On April 25, the family moved to the Wye River Plantation, outside the 25 mile zone Cuban operatives are allowed to travel without permission. The May 5 Miami Herald reported Elián was joined by his classmates (without their parents) and his teacher from his hometown, Cardenas -- and a doctor with antibiotics and antidepressants. On May 17, Granma, the official newspaper of Cuba's Communist Party, released pictures showing Elián in a Young Pioneer uniform. When Elián and Juan Miguel were taken by Craig to a dinner party thrown by Clinton cronies Smith and Elizabeth Bagley on May 6, the media - who had scolded the González family for parading Elián around like a prized pig at the county fair - not only did not remind the White House of its promise the boy would not be exploited, but ignored the event entirely.

Leading the "send-the-boy-back" charge was TIME, whose founder, Henry Luce was, ironically, a rabid anti-Communist. Couching their reports with stereotypes which would not have been tolerated toward any other ethnic group, its April 17 issue denounced the Miami city government as a "banana republic". Newsweek's May 1 issue peppered its "reportage" with phrases such as like "the fiery Marisleysis" (Lazaro's daughter) and "the hotheads around Lazaro". The New York Times denounced the Miami Cubans as "haters"; the Chicago Tribune deemed them as "crazies"; and editorial cartoonist Pat Oliphant drew an ape-like Lazaro thumping his chest (interestingly, the majority of editorial cartoonists sided with the González family). The New York Daily News had this "advice" for "the Little Havana cadre": "Get over it. You lost". Eerily, yet not surprisingly, the media was taking its cues points from Castro. Castro told Granma, Elián had no right to request asylum, which was what most of the "experts" interviewed by the media also said. Castro also called the Miami Cubans "Mafia" and suggested they kidnapped Elián – "talking points" parroted by the media.

The press then tried to sell the public on the idea that everyday life in Fidel's Fiefdom is not only NOT that bad, it's preferable to everyday life in the U.S.! On the April 8 "McLaughlin Group", Eleanor Clift: "To be a poor child in Cuba may in many instances be better than being a poor child in Miami". Charles Kaiser of the Columbia University Journalism School snarked in the April 19 Slate: "I don't think there's any question that Elián belongs with his father. As usual, the Republicans' commitment to 'family values' ends at the border of their fierce hatred for the dreaded Commies... Despite all the hardship and real political oppression, the people remain incredibly vibrant, the literacy rate is higher than it is here, and there is an astonishing array of music, theater, and dance available to everyone in Havana". The literacy rate is higher because Cuba is mono-linguistic, retard! And why does Kaiser, who is gay, refuse to decry Castro's persecution of gays and people with AIDS? Parroting Then there's this gem from CBS News's Randall Pinkston: "people appear untroubled by the lack of modern conveniences. So many of us in America live what Cubans would consider very prosperous lives. Yet we worry that we don't have enough while our homes are filled with gadgets and things paid for with money we don't have". Even Juan Miguel got into the act. In an interview with Dan Rather on "60 Minutes", he asked rhetorically: "What's freedom? Is it, for example, in Cuba, where education and health care is free. Or is it the way it is here? Which of the two is freedom? For example, here, when parents send their children to school, they have to worry about violence. A child could be shot at school. In Cuba, things like that don't happen".

"Politically Incorrect" host Bill Maher mocked the "wailing and screaming" of a González supporter as she watched Elián's jet take off, asking his guests: "Don't you think there's a connection between this kind of wailing and their passionate emotionalism and the fact that they're more economically backward?" Michael McKean, best known as Lenny on the 70s sitcom "Laverne & Shirley": "I think the first thing that they think about every morning is, '[bleep] [bleep]', the good guys lost. And we had to leave our country because of this bad

man' - and he is a bad man - 'But we had to leave our country and we're here, yeah. And now we're here in America, and I'm gonna shake my fist at the gods every day because of this". Shannon Elizabeth then chortled: "It brings attention to them... this would have been over a long time ago". So, according to our "betters", were Cuban-Americans "real Americans", Elián would have been back in Havana by Christmas.

Most disturbing was the reporting from Latino journalists. With the exceptions of columnists Linda Chavez, Richard Rodriguez, and Richard Poe, they not only towed the Clinton/Reno/Castro line, but gleefully participated in the demonizing of the González family and the Miami Cubans. John Quiñones stated on the April 4 "*ABC's World News Tonight*": "It seems like such a contradiction that Cubans, who profess a love of family and respect for the bond between father and son, would be so willing to separate Elián from his father. But in Miami it's impossible to overestimate how everything here is colored by a hatred of communism and Fidel Castro. It's a community with very little tolerance for those who might disagree". *Newsweek's* Joseph Contreras ended his April 17 piece with: "With the right nurturing, Elián González may overcome his nightmares, but he has been scarred and prematurely aged, first by losing his mother in a terrifying accident at sea, then by the grotesque spectacle of his martyrdom in Miami". Geraldo Rivera crowed on the April 25 "*Rivera Live*": "The President isn't the only one who approves of Janet Reno's smash-and-grab operation. If it had been my kid, the only difference is I would have led the charge". NBC News's Jim Avila even went so far as to take aim at Elizabet: "Why did she do it? What was she escaping? By all accounts this quiet, serious young woman was living the good life, as good as it gets for a citizen in Cuba... In Cuba a maid [her occupation], where dollar tips are to be had, is a prestigious job. Elián's life was relatively easy by Cuban standards... A family destroyed by a mother's decision, a decision that now leaves a little boy estranged from his father and forever separated from her". What are these accounts Avila cites? Where is the evidence she "destroyed" her family? It's easy to take potshots at the dead -- and even easier to do when you can hide behind the might of a news organization.

Our "betters" are simply incapable of getting their romantic notions of *La Revolución* out of their addle-ridden brains. They also demonstrated from the get-go they didn't care that the issue was not reuniting Elián with his father, but returning him to a country where its constitution declares children property of the State. Indeed, most viewed the story as a waste of time. "It's the dumbest thing I've ever covered", the *New York Times's* Rick Bragg complained to the Knoxville Metro Pulse. "Some people think hell is a place where you wake up in the morning in a bed of coals. I think it's where you wake up and find out you'll be writing about Elián for the next 643 days". The *Chicago Tribune's* James Warren, told the April 24 *Washington Post*: "I'm not going to pitch [for a Page 1 story] the crazy family running around here all day and bitching on television".

All this said, none of this would have happened had the González family not allowed anti-Castro activists to cynically use the case to further their own agenda. "When Juan Miguel learned that Elián had survived the shipwreck... Lazaro and other family members immediately began quietly working out how father and son would be reunited" the April 17 *TIME* claimed. "But that was before Castro began making his public demands, and before the exile community swooped down on Lazaro's small house in Little Havana and drew the family deep into the local political swamps". Whether that or the claims by the family Juan Miguel told Lazaro to "be on the lookout" for Elizabet and Elián, and to "take good care of my boy" are true isn't the point. The point is what happened after Elián was rescued.

Even those sympathetic to the González family had to cringe as Elián was dragged to DisneyWorld one day then schmoozed up to by politicians the next. But to suggest that the Gonzálezes on both sides of the Straits were naive dupes who found themselves overwhelmed, then muzzled, by "advisors" as things spun out of control would be overlooking the fact that Lazaro, Marisleysis, Juan Miguel, and Elián's grandmothers positively-basked in their 15 minutes. Even Elián become quite the little showman, delighting the crowds who kept a round-the-clock vigil at Lazaro's house with his antics, and flashing "V for Victory" signs at the drop of a hat. The family even went so far as to exploit the religiosity of their neighbors by encouraging them to see Elián as *El Niño Milagro*, "the miracle child", chosen by God to liberate Cuba and send Papa Fidel to the Hell which awaits him.

The release of a videotape on April 14, in which Elián "tells" Juan Miguel that he wants to stay in the U.S. was the last straw on a camel's back already loaded down with missteps, miscalculations, and miscues, and spokesmen could not explain away the male voice heard off-camera coaching the boy. An April 18 letter written to the INS by pediatrician Irwin Redlener - who served on Hillary Clinton's health care task force - concluded Elián was "in a state of imminent danger to his physical and emotional well-being in a home that I consider to be psychologically abusive". Redlener never visited the home, never spoke to Elián, and knew nothing of his well being. But his statement, the tape, and Lazaro's public defiance gave Reno all the excuse she needed to drop the hammer on the Gonzálezes. Government psychologist Paulina Kernberg claimed that Elián played with toy soldiers without anxiety, concluding it's "likely he suffered no lasting harm". Marisleysis, she speculated, "may be an idealized love rather than a maternal figure" for Elián. She advised against the family visiting Elián "in their current angry state" and the whole family "may benefit from counseling". Redlener's and Kernberg's "diagnosis" could be seen as part of Elián's "transition" back to Cuba as well as the effort by the Clinton/Reno/Castro cabal to spin the raid; the perversion of therapeutics for political ends is a totalitarian tradition.

The final nail in the coffin was Elián's "defense team", led by Kendall Coffey, Reno's ex-U.S. Attorney in Miami, who was recruited by Ramón Saúl Sánchez of the Cuban-American Democracy Movement. Problem was Coffey's practice depends on the Democratic Party elite. How could someone with such a conflict of interest be expected to commit professional suicide by squaring off against his pals on 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue?

To say Coffey's strategy was pathetic would be kind. On April 13, the Miami Dade Circuit Court ruled that Lazaro was "too distant a relative" to sustain a claim for custody. On May 1, Coffey filed a notice of appeal of that decision, then dropped it. The ruling was in error; appealing it would have set up a potentially lengthy fight over which takes precedence: federal asylum law or state family law. Coffey then not only did not go to the 11th Circuit Court to show that the raid was illegal and obtained by a false affidavit, he never brought to the Court's attention proof that the INS and Castro had been in cahoots since December. Instead of forcing the government to start at, and work their way through, the Florida courts, Coffey agreed to "fast track" the case. Supposedly so disgusted by Clinton and Reno's shenanigans, Coffey vowed to leave the party, only to race to Al Gore's side for yet another recount to "prove" Bush was trying to "steal" the election from Gore.

Trent Lott crowed he would haul Reno before Congress to make her answer for the raid. Then, nothing. Why? The April 30 New York Daily News: "... Bush campaign manager Joe Allbaugh informed Senate Republicans that [he] wanted the hearings scrapped because the issue is a political loser". This was followed by George Nethercutt lobbying his colleagues to "soften" the 40 year-long trade embargo on Cuba. The GOP-led House and Senate later passed bills allowing American food and medicine to be sold to Cuba.

Breaking into the private homes of innocent citizens can never be condoned, tolerated or allowed in a constitutional republic. To say that Elián "had" to be returned to a country where the official ideology calls for the abolition of the family - in the name of family values, no less - is a contradiction which is beyond despicable. In the perverted universe of Clinton and Reno, the true "rule of law" has suffered the same fate as the American conscience.

UPDATE: Janet Reno dies of Parkinson's disease. [November 7, 2016]

UPDATE: Castro dies 16 years to the day Elián was rescued. [November 25, 2016]

UPDATE: Cubavisión airs an interview with Elián, now 22, in which he memorialized Castro as "a father... Fidel's legacy is each Cuban and person in the world who has been touched by the revolution... Fidel's legacy is me and every young person who has grown under his teachings... He taught us to fly, he taught us to dream and it's now up to us... it's up to us to lead the way, it's up to us to fulfill the revolution". [November 26, 2016]