



BERNIE DWYER

Bernie Dwyer has been linked to the Havana Latin American film festivals and the Cuban Union of Writers and Artists (UNEAC) since 1996 by organizing cultural and film exchanges in Ireland and in Cuba. In 1997 she organised an Irish film showcase at the Latin American Film Festival in Havana including Jim Sheridan and Terry George in the Irish delegation.

In the last few years she has been working on documentaries that feature cultural links between Ireland and Cuba in collaboration with Cuban documentary maker, Roberto Ruiz Rebo. Dwyer and Ruiz have toured extensively in Europe and the United States with their latest work, "Mission against Terror".

DOCUMENTARIES AND AWARDS

- 2000 "*Che, the Irish Legacy*". Awarded Cuban Journalists Union (UPEC) 26th of July and the Jorge Ricardo Massetti award.
- 2002 "*The Footprints of Cecilia McPartland*" (Las huellas de Cecilia McPartland). 26th of July UPEC Award.
- 2003 Award for Digital journalism 26th of July UPEC Award.
- 2004 Special Acknowledgments for her work in anti-terrorist journalism.
- 2004 "*Mission Against Terror*". Special Mention in the 26th Latin American Film Festival in Havana.
- 2005 "*Mission Against Terror*". Special mention Juan Gualberto Gómez's Annual Award. UPE.
- 2005 "*Mission Against Terror*". Jury's award at the Ukraine Film Festival.
- 2006 "*One Man's Story: Philip Agee, Cuba and the CIA*".
- 2007 Felix Emuza medal.
- 2010 "*The Day Diplomacy Died*". 33 minutes directed and written by Bernie Dwyer and Roberto Ruiz Rebo.

INTERVIEW WITH BERNIE DWYER JOURNALIST ON THE MOVIE "THE DAY DIPLOMACY DIED"

Irish journalist and documentary filmmaker Bernie Dwyer gave an interview to the National Information Agency (AIN) on his latest documentary "The Day Diplomacy Died" (The day diplomacy died) and their performances in Europe. Dwyer explicó las razones que la llevaron a realizar el documental y su impacto en el público. Dwyer explained the reasons which led it to make the documentary and its impact on the public.

AIN: Can you please tell us what made you decide to direct and produce this documentary?

Bernie Dwyer: I decided to make this documentary; "The Day Diplomacy Died" as far back as 2003, soon after a book called "The Dissidents" was published here in Havana. This book featured interviews with former Cuban state agents who had infiltrated various groups that were working under the direct influence of diplomatic staff at the US Interests Section office in Havana.

Shortly before the book was published there had been a public outcry in the international press because of the arrest and jailing of 75 so-called independent journalists, librarians and trade unionists. This action by the Cuban government was used to exploit the old chestnut peddled by the right-wing press that there is no freedom of speech or assembly in Cuba.

However the same foreign press journalists that condemned Cuba did not rush to interview the state agents to get their side of the story. So I decided that their story had to be told. The documentary has been a long time in the making because I suffered a serious illness and had to abandon the project for a couple of years. However, at last it is ready.

AIN: And why did you decide to tour Europe and launch the documentary?

Bernie Dwyer: I spent quite a time waiting for the right moment and place to launch the film. As there are Cuban and US interviewees I had to arrange for subtitles in both Spanish and English and I did this in Ireland.

I was then invited to launch the documentary at a city centre cinema in Dublin. So on the 29th of March this year we had a special presentation at the Screen Cinema in

Dublin for an invited audience followed by a question and answer session. About 150 people attended. These included people from the political, community, trade union and arts and cultural world in Dublin. It was a very successful evening leading to interesting questions and discussions. This is often the best part of a presentation with the director present as questions usually cover topics as far ranging as the medical system in Cuba to Fidel Castro's health to the urban agricultural practices being developed in Cuba.

After that there were several showing around Ireland including Galway in the west and Co. Down in the north of Ireland.

AIN: Countries visited?

Bernie Dwyer: After that I went to the European Solidarity with Cuba meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria. This was a particularly successful presentation as there were more than 20 European countries represented. In fact after the showing the president of the Bulgarian Friendship with Cuba group presented a copy of "The Day Diplomacy Died" to the heads of each delegation.

A tour to Denmark, Sweden and Norway followed with took in seven showings in Copenhagen, Oslo, Stockholm and other Swedish cities.

In May I went to Detroit to take part in the US Social Forum. More than 15,000 people attended that event. However it was very fragmented and although we had a workshop to present the documentary, it only attracted 50 people.

AIN: What was people's reaction to the documentary?

Bernie Dwyer: The reaction was always interesting. In a lot of cases people didn't really understand the situation because of the way Cuba can be presented in the foreign media but after some explanation they began to realize the role the US diplomatic staff was playing in interfering in Cuba's internal affairs.

In my opinion, the discussion and question and answer session is one of the benefits of this type of documentary. It gives people an opportunity to ask about the reality of Cuban life and it also helps to explain the history of US involvement in trying to bring an end to the Cuban Revolution. This is why I use a lot of archival material as well as personal testimony to clarify the situation.

AIN: You had at tremendous success on your previous tour to the US with your

documentary “Mission Against Terror” on the Cuban Five, are you planning to tour the US with this documentary?

Bernie Dwyer: There is tour planned with “The Day Diplomacy Died” in October for the west coast of the US taking in San Francisco and Los Angeles as well as other towns. The US is such a huge place that this time I will tour it in segments. The last time in 2005 I did 28 venues in 31 days right across the US. Yes, it was very successful but I don’t think I could do that again health wise.

AIN: Is there any relationship between the Cuban Five and this issue?

Bernie Dwyer: Yes, the cases are just two sides of the same coin. The Cuban Five are imprisoned in the United States for the same reasons that the four former Cuban state agents interviewed in “The Day Diplomacy Died” spent years and years of their lives posing as counterrevolutionaries by infiltrating groups supported by the US Interests Section in Havana. That is to protect their people and their country from on-going attempts to destabilize the Cuban Revolution.

In the case of the Five, they infiltrated terrorist groups in Miami which are already responsible for the deaths of more than three thousand Cuban people and the injuries of another two and a half thousand. Their mission was to report to the Cuban government on the on-going and future plans of these groups so that steps can be taken to put a stop to such illegal and horrific acts. The Cuban government has constantly asked successive US administrations to put a halt to this violence against Cuba emanating from Florida and in the absence of any action taken against the Miami terrorists by the White House, they had no option but to send in their own people. Unfortunately when the Cuban government presented their finding to the FBI, the Cuban Five were arrested in Miami and the terrorists still freely walk the streets.

The Cuban state agents featured in “The Day Diplomacy Died” were working in Cuba against the so-called “internal opposition” set-up and supported by US diplomats in the US Embassy in Havana from the very beginning except for a period under the presidency of Jimmy Carter.

So yes, there is a huge similarity between the work of the Cuban Five in Miami and the work of the former Cuban state agents in Cuba with the same goal; to put a stop to US interference in Cuba’s sovereign right to develop its own society at the behest of the Cuban people.

AIN: What is next?

Bernie Dwyer: Right now I am working on distributing “The Day Diplomacy Died” as far a field as possible. I have sent copies to more than fifty Members of the European Parliament in Brussels. There is a crucial vote coming up in the European Union on September 10th. There will be a review of the EU ‘Common Position’ on Cuba. This position was introduced against Cuba by Spanish President Aznar in 1996 with the support of then British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and George W. Bush. After the arrests in 2003, the ‘Common Position’ was hardened and is now up for review. I am hoping that at least those voting on the issue will take half an hour to view the documentary to hear the other side to the story.

Although there are many subjects I would love to explore, making documentaries is very hard work when there is no money available and the sort of films I want to make doesn’t attract any backers. That’s another reason it takes such a long time to make even one.

However I do have a long cherished project to make a documentary on Cuban Hero Julio Antonio Mella’s mother who was an Irish woman from Cavan. It’s a wonderful story and maybe that will be my next work.