

One-time rising political star in Cuba going to jail

One of the youngest members of Cuba's ruling Politburo was sentenced to 12 years in prison for influence-peddling.

MIAMI HERALD
JUN. 22, 2006

HAVANA - A Communist official long held up as an example of the island's future leadership was sentenced to 12 years in prison for influence-peddling, the party said Wednesday.

Juan Carlos Robinson Agramonte, among the youngest members of the ruling Politburo before being kicked out of the elite body and the party in April, pleaded guilty Friday during a trial in Havana, the official Granma newspaper said. Government prosecutors had sought a 15-year sentence.

"It was demonstrated that Robinson Agramonte, in the open process of his ideological weakening and with abuse of his position, forgot his high responsibilities and the integrity demanded of a revolutionary cadre and used his influence to obtain benefits," Granma said.

It offered no specifics on what benefits were obtained or how Robinson used his influence to get them.

Cuban officials had once pointed with pride to Robinson as an example of the island's young black leadership.

Robinson, now 49, is from the eastern city of Santiago -- Cuba's second-largest city -- and had been the party's first secretary for the Santiago Province since 1994.

But in late April, the Politburo announced that Robinson was expelled from the party for repeatedly failing to overcome "errors" such as abuse of authority and arrogance.

At the time, the party leadership said Robinson had become "a lamentable and unusual case of the inability of a political cadre to overcome his errors."

Cuba is striving to build up its younger leadership to eventually take over for the original revolutionary leaders, many of whom are now in their 70s. President Fidel Castro will turn 80 in August, and his brother and constitutionally designated successor, Defense Minister Raúl Castro, is 75.

"Criticized, warned and exhorted more than once by the [party leadership] to overcome his failings, he pretended to recognize them and end them," the Politburo said in April.

"But that wasn't what happened," it said.

The party leadership indicated Wednesday that Robinson should serve as an example, warning that "in our country, no one, despite their responsibilities and merits, can violate the law. He who does so will inexorably receive the weight of revolutionary justice."