



Roberto Pereda López disappeared September 26, 1972, presumably for political reasons (a forced disappearance).

Pereda, who was in his forties, was a research scientist at the Centro Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas (CENIC) in Havana. In the early 1960s, his close friend, prominent scientist Yasmil Kuri, had sought asylum in the Mexican Embassy in Cuba but was handed over to the Cuban government and sentenced to death. Because he was a first cousin to a high-ranking government official, his life was spared and he served eleven years in prison until his release in 1979, after which he left for the United States.

The friendship with Kuri had already marked Pereda as politically-suspicious. Then, at CENIC, he refused to carry out certain scientific work and openly declared his opposition to the government. He told his family his life was at risk. On September 26, 1972, he left for work and was never seen again. His sons were twelve and thirteen years old.

In 1977, five years after his father disappeared, the older son Alex had to serve the obligatory military service. He refused to go on an internationalist mission overseas, saying he opposed the government and would not kill on its behalf. He was sentenced to three years of prison. Alex Pereda was 17 at the time of incarceration at the former Nieves Morejón Prison, Santi Spiritus, in Las Villas, province. In prison, he took part in a protest with fellow political prisoners, demanding they be held separate from common prisoners. A fight with the guards ensued and he was sentenced to four more years in prison.

During his imprisonment, Alex befriended two men serving sentences for common crimes. **Peñate** (he did not know his first name), was in his 30s and was a taxi driver from Havana imprisoned for killing a woman, although he always sustained his innocence. **Samurai**, was in his 20s and was from Jatibonico, Sancti Spiritus province; he had no family. Alex did not know his real name, as they only used the nickname he was given in prison for having beheaded a man with a machete. In 1982 or 1983, Peñate, Samurai, and a few others, started a group in prison to allegedly overthrow Fidel Castro. When prison authorities found out, Samurai disappeared and Peñate was found dead, hanging in his cell. Fellow prisoners presumed he had been killed by prison authorities, as he was not suicidal.

Released in 1984, Alex left Cuba in 1988 for the United States.

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