

Havana Diary

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WHY DID I ONCE CLAIM, in one of my reflections, that Bush had authorized or ordered my death?

That phrase may appear ambiguous and vague. Perhaps it would be more accurate, though even more confusing, to say that he both authorized and ordered my death. Allow me to explain immediately:

The denunciation surrounding his plan to assassinate me was made before he snatched an electoral victory from his opponent through fraud.

As early as August 5, 2000, I denounced these plans in Pinar del Rio, before a vast congregation of combative citizens who had gathered there for the traditional July 26 festivities, held in that province, in Villa Clara and Ciudad de La Habana in recognition of their merits that year.

Attempts to identify those responsible for the hundreds of plans to assassinate me meet with a shroud of secrecy. All direct and indirect means have been used to bring about my removal. Following Nixon's morally forced renunciation Ford forbade the participation of government employees in assassination schemes.

I am convinced that Carter, bound by ethical convictions of a religious nature, would never have ordered any such action against me. He was the only US president who had a gesture of friendship towards Cuba in several important areas, including the establishment of the US Interests Section in Cuba.

I don't know that Clinton ever ordered my death, so I cannot accuse him of such an action. Unquestionably, he showed respect for the law and acted with political savvy when he accepted the judicial decision that called for the kidnapped child's return to his father and closest relatives, a decision by then backed by the overwhelming majority of the US people.

However, it is also a fact that, during his administration, Posada Carriles hired Central American mercenaries to place bombs in the hotels and recreational centers of cities like Havana and Varadero in order to strike at Cuba's economy, hit by the blockade and the special period. The terrorist had no reservations about declaring that the young Italian tourist who perished in one of the explosions was "in the wrong place at the wrong time", a phrase Bush repeated recently like the line from a poem. The money and even the electronic materials used to assemble those bombs were provided by the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), which distributed the handsome sums at its disposal through shameless lobbying with members of different parties at the US Congress.

At the close of 1997, the 7th Latin American Summit of Heads of State and Government, which I was obliged to attend, was to be held on Isla Margarita, Venezuela.

On October 27 that year, a vessel called "La Esperanza" was en route to Isla Margarita. While sailing very close to Puerto Rican coasts, it was intercepted by a patrol boat of the Coast Guard and Customs Service of that occupied island on suspicion of drug trafficking. On the vessel were four Cuban-born terrorists carrying two 50-calibre Barrett semi-automatic assault rifles with infrared-

guided telescopic sights, capable of delivering precision rounds to armor-plated vehicles and planes in mid-air or about to take off or land from a distance of over a thousand meters, and 7 boxes of munitions.

The semi-automatic rifles were the property of Francisco Jose Hernandez, Chairman of the Cuban American National Foundation. The yacht “La Esperanza” was the registered property of Jose Antonio Llamas, one of the directors of that counterrevolutionary organization. Recently, the latter declared that CANF had purchased a cargo helicopter, ten ultra-light, remote-controlled planes, seven ships and abundant explosive materials, with the express aim of executing terrorist actions against Cuba. The organization also had another yacht at its disposal, the “Midnight Express”, which, according to Llamas, was to transport the Chairman—the head of heads—Mas Canosa to the island, where he would declare himself President after Fidel had been assassinated and his government overthrown.

American officers in Puerto Rico had no choice but to turn the four crew members over to the courts. In Venezuela, Posada Carriles was to coordinate the execution of the plan. He was expected to arrive there at any moment.

Could US authorities, who generated and provided the Foundation with public funds and million-dollar businesses, have been unaware of these facts?

In December 1999, the detainees were acquitted by an indulgent jury, for “lack of evidence”. The rigged proceedings were manipulated by Hector Pesquera, corrupt FBI officer who was later rewarded with the directorship of FBI headquarters in Miami and was a key figure in the arrest of the five Cuban anti-terrorist activists in Florida.

The notorious Cuban-American mafia was preparing for the November 2000 presidential elections. Both parties were contending for its support, for the Florida state could tilt the balance. The chieftains, of pure Batista stock, were the experts in committing fraud. In the address I mentioned above, I literally said, among other things:

“The so-called Republican Convention has just come to an end. It was held in none other than the city of Philadelphia, home to the famous 1776 Declaration of Independence. Actually, (...) those slaveholders who rebelled against the British colonial rule did not abolish the disgraceful practice of slavery—which remained in effect for almost a whole century longer (...).

“(…) the first announcement made at the Republican Convention just held in Philadelphia under the leadership of the party’s illustrious candidate, [in violation of major international agreements], was the plan to considerably raise the military budget for research and development, and the construction of an antimissile shield to cover the entire nation with a radar network that could detect enemy missiles en route to U.S. territory and shoot them down in mid-air.

“Those holding these views are unable to understand that such a policy would meet with the overwhelming opposition of the rest of the world, including Europe. That, like a magnet, it would bring together all those nations threatened by a strategy that would leave them helpless against the United States. A new, dangerous and extremely costly arms race would immediately follow and nothing could prevent the proliferation of nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction “.

I dared predict these events seven years before Bush's recent visit to the Albanian capital, which was the subject of one of my reflections.

I continued my address as follows:

"The authors of the plan know very well that slightly more than half the American people, who are still confused and insufficiently informed about this complex issue, believe that to be the most suitable solution in the interest of the country's peace and security. However, the adoption of this extreme position by the Republican candidate vis a vis any other more sensible or reasonable proposal from his opponent would present him to voters as the strong, farsighted, tough guy that the United States needs to confront all imaginary or real dangers. This is the good news they sent out from Philadelphia to all of the peoples on Earth".

This was still well before witnessing the occupation of Afghanistan and the plans to unleash a war against Iraq.

I proceeded to denounce Bush's program vis-a-vis Latin America:

"What does this smart platform have to offer Latin America and the Caribbean in particular? There is a phrase that says it all: "The next American century should include all of the Americas." This simple statement means no less than the proclamation of the United States' right of ownership over Latin America and the Caribbean.

"It later adds: 'In concert with the Congress, (the president) will work with key democracies (...) and— above all— Mexico. '(...). Particularly striking is the phrase that reads: '...and —above all—Mexico' since that is a country they robbed of half its territory through an unjustifiable, expansionist war. Their obvious intent is to begin with the economic annexation and full political subordination of that country to the United States and then do likewise with the rest of the countries in our region, imposing a free trade agreement essentially favorable to US interests, from which not even the tiniest Caribbean island could escape. They mean, of course, the free circulation of capital and commodities, not the people!

"As expected, the highly biased Philadelphia platform devotes a substantial part of its section on Latin America to Cuba. Our economic and political relations will change when the Cuban regime frees all political prisoners, legalizes peaceful protest, allows opposition political activity, permits free expression, and commits to democratic elections. For the authors of this demagogic abomination, freedom and democracy mean an outdated, corrupt system in which it is money alone that decides and elects, and in which a presidential candidate is nominated, with lightning speed, as the heir to a vacant throne."

"Another wire story reports that: "The platform, aside from active support for the enemies of the Revolution, includes the broadcasting of news from the United States to the Caribbean nation.' That is they intend to keep up with the filth spewed against Cuba by subversive radio stations located in US territory; they will persist in the outrageous use of the name of Jose Marti—a name that is glorious and sacred to our people—in official US government broadcasts directed against Cuba".

"[At a press conference. US legislators of Cuban descent euphorically squealed]: "This is unprecedented language. Never before has the Republican Party made such a broad commitment".

“To top off the mountain of garbage contained in the Republican platform. It is finally stated: Republicans believe that the United States should adhere to the principles established by the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act, which recognizes the rights of Cuban refugees fleeing communist tyranny”.

“The prestige of the imperial policy will so crumble that not even its dust will remain. We will systematically denounce and demolish one by one—its hypocrisy and lies. They obviously have absolutely no idea what kinds of people have been forged in these 40 years of Revolution.

“Our message will reach all corners of the Earth, and our struggle will serve as an example. The world, ever more ungovernable, will fight until hegemony and the subjugation of peoples become totally unsustainable.

“Whoever is elected leader of the empire should not ignore that Cuba demands the total removal of the murderous Cuban Adjustment Act and the criminal pieces of legislation that bear the notorious names of Torricelli and Helms-Burton as well as the genocidal blockade and economic war. It should be noted that those who have authored, promoted and enforced these laws and policies are guilty of the crime of genocide, as defined and condemned by international treaties signed by both the United States and Cuba.”

“They must not forget that although no lawsuits have been filed so far demanding compensation for moral damage—and this compensation could be substantial—the US government already owes the Cuban people over 300 billion dollars for the human damage resulting from its mercenary invasion by the Bay of Pigs, its dirty war and many other crimes.”

“They should not entertain any illusion regarding Cuba’s stance if relations between the United States and our country ever become as normal as those currently existing with other socialist countries like China and Vietnam. We will not remain silent in the face of any crime, aggression or injustice committed against other peoples. Our battle of ideas will not cease as long as the current imperialist, hegemonic and unipolar system is still in place and remains a scourge of humanity and a mortal threat to the survival of our species.

“A growing number of millions of Americans are becoming aware of the horrors of the economic and political order imposed on the world”.

“The Cuban Revolution does not merely confide in the moral integrity and patriotic and revolutionary spirit of its people, and in the survival instinct of the human species, whose very existence is threatened. It also believes and confides in the traditional idealism of the American people that can only be led into unjust wars and shameful aggressions through vulgar deceit. Once demagoguery and lies are definitely exposed and defeated, the world will find excellent allies in the American people. This is what happened in the case of the repugnant war that cost the lives of millions of Vietnamese and over 50,000 young Americans. A more recent example is the American people’s noble support of a little boy and a Cuban family, victims of a brutal crime perpetrated by a band of criminals who, after having taken advantage of that country’s hospitality, ended up showing their hatred and frustration by trampling and burning the US flag.

“The changes in US policy toward Cuba must be unilateral because the US leaders have unilaterally imposed the blockade and economic war against Cuba.”

“From here, from this province where the Bronze Titan ultimately crowned, in Mantua, the colossal feat of the invasion he had begun in Mangos de Daragud. we say to them: You fools! Do you not understand that Cuba is impregnable, that its Revolution is indestructible, that its people will never bow down or surrender? Do you not realize that our patriotism and internationalism are as deeply rooted in our minds and hearts as the imposing mogotes of Pinar del Rio are in the volcanic rocks of this part of an island that is called Cuba and is surrounded today by the halo of having successfully endured almost 42 years of blockade and aggression by the most formidable power that ever existed?”

“We are defended by the strength of our prestige and the example we have set, the indestructible steel that is the justice of our cause, the inextinguishable fire of our truth and our morale as well as the double trench of stone and ideas that we have built which is unassailable.

“That is why, Mr Bush, if you finally become the leader of what no longer is and can no longer be called a republic but rather an empire, then, in the spirit of an honest adversary, I suggest that you leave aside the euphoria and fever of your Convention, and reconsider your position in order to avoid the risk of becoming the tenth American president to come and go watching with sterile and unnecessary bitterness a Revolution that will not bow down or surrender and that can never be destroyed.

“I am very much aware of what you have recklessly told your close and indiscreet friends in the Cuban-American mob: that you can solve the problem of Cuba very easily, in clear reference to the methods used in the sinister era when the Central Intelligence Agency was directly involved in assassination plots against our country’s leaders. Because I do not share this narrow view of the role of individuals, in history, I urge you not to forget that for every one of the revolutionary leaders you may decide to remove, there are millions of men and women in Cuba who are capable of taking their places and altogether there are far more of them than you could ever remove, or that your immense political, economic and military power could ever defeat.” □