

Statement Presented by Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez at his Sentencing Hearing held in Miami on Wednesday, December 27, 2001

Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul.
—Walt Whitman (From Song of Myself)

Your Honor,

Allow me to say that I share everything that has been said in this courtroom by my four brothers in arms: Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labaniño, René González and Fernando González. They spoke with dignity and courage to the Court. Our speeches are based on the strictest truth, on the soundness of the principles we embrace and in the honor of the heroic Cuban people. It is only fair to say that the lawyers and their assistants acted in a highly professional, honest and courageous manner and that the translators, Liza, Richard and the marshals worked in a very ethical and professional way.



Antonio and his son Gabriel

At the beginning I wrote in my diary of my long days, "... a real man does not look to see on which side one lives best, but on which side lies duty". Those are José Martí's words, which a century after they were written still encourage, live and are the essence of what is most pure and altruistic.

It is often difficult
To find the exact words,
But these have been in me
Beaten
Shaken
Incubated by the truth,
Waiting to break the shell and see the light.
And the day has come.
Allow me to explain my reasons, your Honor, in the clearest and most concise way:
Cuba,
My little country, has been
Attacked,
Assaulted,
And slandered
Decade after decade
By a cruel
Inhuman and absurd
Policy.
A real terrorist war,
Fierce and open,
The harbinger of horror
Of sabotage,
A ruin, murder maker
A grief carrier,
Of the most profound grief,
Death.

This aggression has been exposed not only by documents and information from the Cuban government but also by secret documents that the very government of the United States has declassified.

This aggression has included the CIA's recruiting, financing and training counterrevolutionary agents; the Bay of Pigs Invasion; Operation Mongoose; pretexts for military intervention; plans to assassinate heads of State and Government; infiltrations by armed groups; sabotage; violations of our airspace; spy flights, spraying with bacteriological and chemical agents; machine gun fire on our coasts and buildings; bombs in hotels and other social, cultural, historic and tourist centers, all kinds of cruel and vicious acts of provocation.

And the outcome of these acts:

More than three thousand four hundred dead; more than two thousand people left totally or partially handicapped; substantial damage to the economy, the source of our livelihood; hundreds of thousands of Cubans who are born and grow up under a harsh blockade and in a hostile cold war climate. Terror, hardships and pain have been brought over the entire population.

Where have such unceasing ruthless acts been hatched and financed?

For the most part, in the United States of America.

What has the government of this country done to avoid them?

Practically nothing.... And the aggression has not ceased...

Today, people who are responsible for some of these actions still walk freely the streets of Miami. And radio stations and other media give coverage to and instigate new acts of aggression against the Cuban people.

Why so much hatred for the Cuban people?

Is it because Cuba chose a different road?

Because its people want socialism?

Because it did away with the large estates and wiped out illiteracy?

Because it gave free education and medical care to its people?

Because it lets the dawn break freely over its children?

Cuba has never placed the security of the United States in jeopardy nor committed any act of aggression or terrorism against it. It deeply loves peace and quiet and wants the best relations between our two countries. It has shown that it admires and respects the American people.

"Cuba is not a military threat to the United States," Admiral Carroll said in this courtroom.

General Atkinson testified that Cuba presents "zero" military threat to the United States. It is my country's unquestionable right like that of any other-- to defend itself against those who try to harm its people.

The job of putting a stop to these terrorist acts has been complex and difficult because the terrorists have enjoyed the complicity or lax tolerance of the authorities.

My country has done everything possible to warn the US government of the danger of these acts and to do so it has used official, unofficial and public channels. However, such cooperation has never been reciprocated.

In the nineties, fired up by the demise of the socialist camp, terrorist groups intensified their activities against Cuba. It was, they felt, the long dreamed hour for stirring up the final chaos, for terrorizing the people, destabilizing the economy, damaging the tourist industry, building up a crisis and dealing the death blow to the Cuban Revolution.

What could Cuba do to defend itself and be forewarned of the terrorist plans against it? What could it do to avoid a greater conflict? What options did it have to safeguard its sovereignty and the safety of its children?

One way to prevent these brutal and bloody acts, to prevent the suffering becoming worse because of more deaths was to move quietly.

There was no alternative but to rely on men who out of love for a just cause, out of love for their country and their people, out of love for peace and life were prepared to voluntarily agree to carry out this honorable duty against terrorism, that is, to give advanced warning of the danger of attack.

The reason behind my acts and the motive for doing my duty, the same as my comrades', has been to prevent a conflict that would bring sorrow to our peoples.

We were not moved to do what we did by money or resentment. It did not occur to any of us to harm the noble and hard-working American people. We did nothing detrimental to the national security of the United States. The court records show it. Those who doubt my words may examine them and find the truth.

The barbaric attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon last September 11 filled with indignation everyone who loves a peaceful world. The unexpected and unwanted deaths of thousand of this country's innocent citizens pierced our hearts with deep sorrow.

Nobody can deny that terrorism is an inhuman, ruthless and repugnant phenomenon that must be eliminated with the utmost urgency.

"And in order to make sure that we're able to conduct a winning victory, we've got to have the best intelligence we can possibly have." "Unity is needed to strengthen the intelligence agencies, so that we can learn what the plans are before they are implemented and to discover the terrorists before they attack."

These two statements were not made by the president of the Republic of Cuba, our Commander in Chief Fidel Castro, but by the president of the United States, after these horrendous attacks. I have wondered over and over again. Are these statements not valid for Cuba, which is a victim of terrorism?

This is exactly what Cuba has done to try to put an end to this scourge, which has also buffeted her territory for so many years and made martyrs of her people.

Your Honor,

A "trial" took place

This courtroom knows as much,

We lived together and we lived through days full of statements

Testimony,

Circumstantial evidence,

Evidence,

Arguments,

Motions,

Commitments,

Doubts,

Slanderous allegations,

Falsehoods,

Deliberations,

I didn't come here today to justify anything,

I came to tell

The truth:

"That is the only thing I am committed to."

Accord; there was none except the commitment to be useful to the world, to serve a valid cause called humanity and also motherland.

Intent, there was none except to prevent senselessness and crime and to save the living flower from chance, sudden, pointless and premature death.

There was no transgression and no offense. Nobody was insulted.

Nothing was stolen. No one was deceived. No one was cheated.

No one tried to or practiced espionage.

Nobody ever asked me to get any classified information. Here in this courtroom the witnesses' statements confirmed that, not only defense witnesses but also those of the prosecution itself.

Read General Clapper's, Joseph Santos' and General Atkinson's testimony, to name but a few, and they will confirm what I say in all honesty.

And many other people could have come to this court to explain things about my life, to say what I did every day just as Dalila Borrego, Edward Donohue, and Tim Carey came. On the other hand, nobody came here to speak against me, nor would it be possible to find anyone who, in all sincerity, could point to any failing in my conduct in this society.

I love the island where I grew up, where I was educated and where my mother, one of my beloved children, many of the people I love and many of my other friends live. I also love this country where I was born, where, over the last ten years, I have given and received real proof of love and solidarity.

I am certain that a bridge of friendship will definitely be laid not only between these two peoples but also among all the peoples in the world.

It falls to you, your Honor, to hand down sentence in this long and tortuous trial.

Bring proof and evidence together!

Voices will say that they don't exist.

Take into account facts and arguments!

Voices will say they carry no weight:

Read cases and testimony!

Voices will say it is not possible

To blame these men.

Voices that arise from the heart itself.

Voices inspired by the strength of justice.

Voices which did not want to be, or which were not

Listened to by a jury

Which could not serve justice.

They were wrong! Their verdict was sacrilege. But we were aware, from the beginning, that when it comes to Cuba, Miami is an impossible place for justice.

This has been, above all else, a political trial.

Personally, I ask for nothing else but justice; for the good of our countries, for the sake of truth. A fair, full sentence, free from political strings, would have sent an important message in this crucial moment in the fight against terrorism.

Allow me to repeat that I have never caused personal harm to anyone not have caused any property damage. I have never tried to take any action, which would endanger the national security of the United States.

If I were asked to do the same thing again, I would do it with honor. An excerpt from a letter that Cuban general Antonio Maceo, who fought for Cuban independence in the 19th century, wrote to a Spanish general comes to mind at this time with force and passion:

"I shall not find any reasons for having cut myself off from humanity. I pursue not a policy of hatred but of love; this is not an exclusionist policy but one founded in human morality".

Because of your rulings, my beloved brothers and I must be unjustly kept in prison, but there we shall not cease from defending the cause and the principles we have embraced.

The day will come when we will not have to live under the shadow of fear and death, and on that historic day, the true justice of our cause will be seen.

Your Honor,

Many days and months of an unjust, cruel and horrible imprisonment have gone by! I have sometimes wondered, what is time? And like Saint Agustin I have answered myself, "If they ask me I don't know, but if they don't ask me, I do know." Hours of solitude and hopes, of reflection about injustice and small mindedness; eternal minutes in which memories burn bright: There are memories that burn the memory!
I take these verses by Martí for this last page that I write in the diary of my long days:

"I have lived:

It was to duty that I pledged my arms

And not once did the sun drop down behind the hills

That did not see my struggle and my victory..."

(Free verses)

And here in this courtroom I quote from the Uruguayan and world poet, Mario Benedetti:

"...victory will be there, just like me, simply germinating"

Because, in the end, we shall rest free and victorious beneath that sun which we are denied today

Thank you

Antonio Guerrero