

# Dissidents or Traitors?

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Translation: Machetera

The “free press” in Europe and the Americas – the one that lied shamelessly about the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq or described the putschist regime of Micheletti in Honduras as “interim” – has redoubled its ferocious campaign against Cuba. As a result, it’s important to distinguish between the true reason for it, and the pretext. The first, which establishes the global framework for this campaign, is the imperial counter-offensive launched near the end of the Bush administration, and whose most resounding example was the reactivation and mobilization of the Fourth Fleet. Contrary to the predictions of certain gullible people, this policy, dictated by the military-industrial complex, was not merely continued but reinforced by the recent treaty signed by Obama and Colombia’s President Uribe, through which the United States is to be granted the use of at least seven military bases in Colombian territory, diplomatic immunity for all U.S. personnel affected by these operations, license to bring in or remove any kind of cargo without authorities in the host country being able to register what’s coming in or going out, and the right of U.S. expeditionary forces to enter or leave Colombia using any kind of i.d. card whatsoever attesting to their identity. As if all that were not enough, Washington’s policy of recognizing the “legality and legitimacy” of the coup d’etat government in Honduras and the subsequent fraudulent elections is yet one more example of the perverse continuity that links policies implemented by the White House, regardless of the skin color of its principal occupant. And in this general imperial counter-offensive, the attack and destabilization of Cuba plays an extremely important role.

These are the true, underlying reasons. But the pretext for this renewed attack was the fatal outcome of the hunger strike of Orlando Zapata Tamayo, now reinforced by an identical action initiated by another “dissident,” Guillermo Fariñas Hernández and one which will no doubt be followed by those of other participants and accomplices of this aggression. As is well known,

Zapata Tamayo was (and continues being) presented by these “media of mass deception” - as Noam Chomsky adequately described them – as a “political dissident” when in reality he was an ordinary prisoner who’d been recruited by the enemies of the Cuban revolution, and unscrupulously used as a mere tool of their subversive projects. The case of Fariñas Hernández is not the same, but even so, it holds certain similarities and deepens an argument that must be viewed with complete seriousness.

It’s important to remember that there’s a long history to these attacks. They began at the very triumph of the revolution but, as official and formal policy of the United States government, they began on March 17, 1960, when the National Security Council approved a “Covert Action Program” against Cuba, proposed by the then CIA Director, Allen Dulles. Partially declassified in 1991, this program identified four main courses of action, with the first two being “opposition building” and the launching of a “powerful propaganda offensive” in order to strengthen and make credible that opposition. It couldn’t be clearer. After the resounding failure of these plans, George W. Bush created a special commission within the State Department itself, in order to promote “regime change” in Cuba, a euphemism to avoid the phrase “promote counter-revolution.” Cuba has the dubious privilege of being the only country in the world for which the State Department has designed a project of this sort, thus confirming the unhealthy Yankee obsession with annexing the island, and on the other hand, confirming that José Martí was right when he warned our people about the dangers of U.S. expansionism. The first report from this commission, published in 2004, had 458 pages and explained in the most minute detail everything that should be done to introduce a liberal democracy, respect human rights and establish a market economy in Cuba. To carry out the plan, \$59 million dollars a year was budgeted (in addition to the money set aside for undercover action) of which, according to the proposal, \$36 million was earmarked for the fomenting and financing of “dissident” activities. In summary, what the press presents as a noble and patriotic internal dissidence seems rather to be the methodical application of the imperial project designed to complete the old dream of the U.S. rightwing: a definitive takeover of Cuba.

Having said that, a conceptual clarification is necessary. It’s no accident that the mainstream press speak so casually of “political dissidents” incarcerated in Cuba. But are they “political dissidents” or something else? It would be difficult to say for all of them, but it is an absolute certainty that the majority of those who are in prison are not there for being political dissidents but for something far more serious: “treason.” Let’s examine this closely. In Norberto Bobbio’s famous *Diccionario de Política [Political Dictionary]*, the political scientist Leonardo Morlino defined dissent as “any kind of disagreement without stable organization, and as such, non-institutionalized, that does not try to exchange an incumbent government for another, much less topple the existing political system. Dissent is expressed solely through exhortation, persuasion, criticism, pressure, always with non-violent methods, in order to induce decision-makers to prefer certain options over others or to modify preceding decisions or political directives. Dissent never questions the legitimacy or fundamental rules upon which a political community is based, but only very specific rules or decisions.” (pp. 567-568). Further on, he points out that

there is a threshold that, once crossed, turns dissent and dissidents into something else. “The threshold is crossed when the legitimacy of the system and the rules of the game are questioned, and violence is used: or when intentional disobedience becomes a norm; or finally, when disagreement is institutionalized in an opposition that may include the toppling of the system among its objectives.” (p. 569). In the former Soviet Union, two of the most notable political dissidents, whose actions were consistent with the definition suggested above, were the physicist Andrei Sakharov and the writer Alexander Isayevich Solzhenitsyn; the same applies to Rudolf Bahro in East Germany and Karel Kosik in the former Czechoslovakia. In the United States, the outstanding example from the middle of the last century is Martin Luther King, and in the Israel of our time Mordechai Vanunu, the nuclear scientist who revealed the existence of the atomic arsenal in that country and was condemned as a result to eighteen years in prison without the “free press” taking note of the affair.

The Cuban dissidence, unlike that of Sakharov, Solzhenitsyn, Bahro, Kosik, King and Vanunu, fits in the latter definition because its purpose is the subversion of constitutional order and the toppling of the system. Furthermore, and this is the essential point, it is trying to do so by putting itself at the service of a powerful enemy, the United States, which for fifty years has gone after Cuba using every imaginable medium; with an integrated blockade (economic, financial, technological, commercial, computing), with permanent aggressions and attacks of all kinds and with migratory legislation developed exclusively for the island (the Cuban Adjustment Act) which encourages illegal immigration to the United States by endangering the lives of those who wish to reap its benefits. While Washington constructs a new wall of shame along its border with Mexico in order to stop the influx of Mexican and Central American immigrants, it grants every imaginable benefit to those who, coming from Cuba, set foot on its territory. Can those who receive money, advice and directions from a country that is an objective enemy of their homeland and act in congruence with its aspiration to precipitate a “regime change” that would put an end to the revolution really be considered “political dissidents?”

In order to answer this, let’s leave Cuban laws to the side for a moment and look at the laws established by other countries. Article III, Section 3 of the constitution of the United States says that “Treason against the United States, shall consist only in levying War against them, *or in adhering to their Enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort.*” The punishment for this crime rests in the hands of the U.S. Congress; in 1953 Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were executed in the electric chair, accused of treason for supposedly having “adhered to their Enemies” by revealing the secrets of atomic bomb manufacture to the Soviet Union. In Chile’s case, Article 106 of that country’s Penal Code establishes that “Anyone who from within the territory of the Republic conspires against its foreign security *in order to encourage a foreign power to declare war on Chile*, will be punished with a life sentence in a maximum security prison. If war has begun, the penalty will be increased to a death sentence.” In Mexico, a country that has been victimized throughout its history by U.S. interventionism in its internal affairs, Article 123 of its Penal Code defines a wide variety of situations as treason, such as “acts against the independence, sovereignty or integrity of the Mexican nation with the goal of *subjecting her to a foreign*

*person, group or government; take part in hostile actions against the nation, through warlike actions at the orders of a foreign state or cooperation with it in any way that could harm Mexico; receive any benefit, or accept a promise to receive it, with the goal of realizing any of the acts indicated in this article; accept a job, task or commission on behalf of the invader and dictate, agree or vote in such a way as to support the intruding government and weaken the national one.”* The penalty for the commission of these crimes is, depending on the circumstances, imprisonment for from five to forty years. Article 214 of Argentina’s Penal Code says that “[Treason] shall be punished with imprisonment for ten to twenty-five years or life, and in one or another case, absolute perpetual imprisonment, unless the act has not been covered in another provision of this code, all Argentines or anyone who owes obedience to the Nation by reason of their employment or public function, who takes up arms against it, who *unites with its enemies or lends them any aid or comfort.*”

It’s not necessary to continue with this brief review of comparative legislation in order to understand that what the “free press” calls dissidence is that which in any country in the world – starting with the United States, the great promoter, organizer and financier of the anti-Cuban campaign – would be plainly and simply characterized as treason, and none of the accused could ever be considered a “political dissident.” In the case of the Cubans, the great majority of the so-called dissidents (if not all) are involved in the crime of uniting with a foreign power that is openly hostile to the Cuban nation and of receiving from its representatives – diplomats or otherwise – money and all kinds of logistical support in order to, as the Mexican legislation points out, “support the intruding government and weaken the national one.” In other words, in order to destroy the new social, political and economic order created by the revolution. Washington would not characterize a group of its citizens any other way, had they been receiving resources from a foreign power that had been hounding the United States for half a century with the directive to subvert the constitutional order. None of the abovementioned genuine dissidents brought an infamy of this kind upon their countries. They were relentless critics of their governments, but never did they put themselves at the service of a foreign state whose ambition was to oppress their homeland. They were dissidents, not traitors.

\* *The Spanish version of this article can be found in [www.atilioboron.com](http://www.atilioboron.com)*

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