

**Statement by Fernando González Llort at his sentencing in Miami, Tuesday, December 18, 2001**

***"More than 40 years ago my country and my people were obliged to wake up to the danger and called upon to defend their freedom"***

Your Honor,

I share with my comrades who have preceded me here in their recognition and gratitude for the professional behavior of Richard, the translators who have worked so efficiently, and the U.S. Marshals.

I also share in what has been expressed here by every one of my brothers at their sentencing hearings. I feel honored by the friendship of these comrades and brothers, who received their unjust sentences with such courage and dignity.

I also want to express my gratitude for the professional work of the attorneys representing the five of us, particularly Joaquín Méndez and the South Florida district public defenders office.

If it were not very clear to me that the fanaticism, hatred and irrationality felt towards Cuba are generated and stimulated by only a minority segment of the Cuban-American community living here, I would not have agreed to be represented by a member of that community. His professional approach to this case shows that, contrary to what those who control the Hispanic media would like to make everyone believe, with their stridently anti-Cuban stance, the majority of the Cuban-American community in Florida has a rational attitude towards their country of origin, even when they hold opinions that differ with the government of Cuba.

This is also demonstrated by the fact that hundreds of thousands of Cuban-Americans travel to Cuba every year, and send money to their relatives there.

Those who believe that Cuban radio stations in Miami and the extremist Cuban organizations based here represent the point of view of the majority of Cuban-Americans living in this city have fallen into the trap set by this extremist and minority-based yet economically powerful sector. They try to sell an image of unity and pretend they represent the sentiments of hundreds of thousands of Cubans who live here, when this is not the case.

Your Honor:

I initially thought the prosecution would come to this courtroom today to request that I be sentenced to one year of probation. After all, that was what this same District Attorney's Office offered Mr. Frómata when he bought a Stinger missile, C-4 explosive, grenades and other weapons from an undercover government agent. It did not even matter that Mr. Frómata confessed to the undercover agent himself his terrorist intentions and the murderous, unscrupulous use that would be made of these materials.

But then I thought it over again, and I realized that I would have to be dreaming to expect the same kind of treatment from the District Attorney's Office. After all, I am a Cuban from over there, from the island, and so when it comes to sentencing me, all kinds of considerations



**Fernando & Rosa Aurora, his wife**

come into play. These include the total ignorance as to what Cuba really is, and the hatred and irrationality towards my country stimulated by an extremist sector that controls what is said here about Cuba while silencing any other, more rational opinions expressed.

While our trial was underway in this courtroom, Esteban Ventura Novo passed away in Miami, and I am bringing this up because I believe it is symbolic of something.

Esteban Ventura Novo was one of the chiefs of police under the Fulgencio Batista dictatorship in Cuba, before the triumph of the Revolution. He was responsible for the torture, murder and disappearance of dozens of young people in the Cuban capital. And all of this happened with the consent and support of the U.S. government, led at the time by Eisenhower.

When the revolutionary government took power in Cuba, Ventura Novo and others like him, perpetrators of crimes against the Cuban people, were received and sheltered by this country's government. Many of them were advised, directed and financed by U.S. intelligence agencies, in their dirty war against a government that obviously enjoyed and continues to enjoy the support of its people.

This marked the beginning of a long history of aggression against Cuba in every field of the country's economic and social life. A history in which economic warfare, biological warfare, and psychological warfare through propaganda and the threat of military attack, have combined with terrorism, sabotage, paramilitary actions and attempts on the lives of the political leaders of the Revolution, almost all of them originating in South Florida.

The prosecution will say that this is just Cuba's propaganda and paranoia. I wonder if they would have the nerve to go to Cuba and say that to the mothers, spouses and children of those who have lost their lives as victims of these acts of aggression. Such statements on the part of the prosecution demonstrate their lack of human sensitivity and their inability to put themselves in someone else's shoes.

The activities of the Cuban-American terrorist and paramilitary groups based in South Florida have been used as instruments of this country's foreign policy towards Cuba through their direct organization by U.S. government agencies, the support given by these agencies to the extremist groups that perpetrate the acts, or by simply allowing them to operate without real persecution or with benevolent treatment when someone has actually been arrested.

The terrorist groups of the Miami Cuban ultra-right wing were created, trained and financed by the CIA. This has always been abundantly clear to the Cuban people. If there are still any doubts among those present in this courtroom, they need merely to take a look at the documents declassified by the United States government itself in 1997 and 1998, which clearly expose the decisions adopted by this country's top leaders.

One of these documents refers to a meeting attended by high-level officials, headed up by the vice president at the time, Richard Nixon. This was the meeting at which the so-called "Program of Covert Action Against the Castro Regime" was approved. In a memorandum on the meeting, one of the participants, General Goodpaster, noted, "The President said that he knows of no better plan for dealing with this situation. The great problem is leakage and breach of security. Everyone must be prepared to swear that he (Eisenhower) has not heard of it. (...) He said our hand should not show in anything that is done."

I ask myself: what can we expect 30 or 40 years from now, when they decide to declassify documents on what is happening today?

The majority of Cuban-Americans who remain active in terrorist actions against Cuba today, 40 years later, are well known to the United States security agencies, because they belong to those agencies, and have learned everything they know about technical means and working methods from them.

Their ties with the far right fundamentalists of U.S. politics have led to their apparent involvement in the darkest episodes of this country's recent history: the assassination of President Kennedy, the Watergate scandal, the murders of Orlando Letelier and Ronnie Moffitt, and the clandestine supply of arms to the Nicaraguan Contras, in violation of the laws passed by Congress. Their activities have always run counter to the interests of the American people.

Perhaps it is their complicity with and loyalty to that political sector of this society that guarantees them impunity for their actions against Cuba, and provides them with the certitude that their activities will be overlooked by the authorities, and that political pressure will be exerted in their favor in the event that they are caught. The facts prove this to be so.

Such is the case of Luis Posada Carriles and Orlando Bosch, both with long histories of ties with the CIA. Together, they were the masterminds behind the blowing up in mid-flight of a Cuban commercial airplane on October 6, 1976, an act that caused the deaths of 73 innocent people.

Orlando Bosch lives as a free man in this community thanks to the parole granted by former president George Herbert Bush, despite the fact that officials from this country's own Department of Justice consider him a dangerous and notorious terrorist.

The recommendations and pressures of Florida Republican representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen played a major role in the granting of this presidential parole to Orlando Bosch. She is, therefore, a defender and protector of terrorists.

The evidence submitted here by the defense --documents known to the FBI and introduced during the trial-- prove that Orlando Bosch has not ceased to conspire to commit terrorist acts against Cuba from Miami. But, he has not been arrested.

This past August 22, a full-page ad was published in The Miami Herald, in which a so-called "Cuban Patriotic Forum" established among its principles that it recognizes and supports the use of any methods in the struggle against Cuba. One of the signatories of this declaration was Orlando Bosch. Such is the impunity of his acts.

The case of Posada Carriles is even more shameful. Having escaped from a Venezuelan jail, where he was being held for his participation in the blowing up of a Cuban commercial plane that killed 73 innocent civilians, he surfaced in Central America with a new false name, working under the orders of none other than Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North. North, of course, was the official from the Reagan administration's Security Council involved in the so-called Iran-Contra scandal, subsequently investigated by a special prosecutor.

All of this is documented and known to the U.S. security services. They also know that it was the Cuban-American National Foundation that financed and organized Posada Carriles' escape from a Venezuelan jail.

Today, Luis Posada Carriles and three other Cuban-Americans resident in Miami, all with long histories of involvement in terrorist acts against Cuba and also in the U.S. territory, are currently held in detention in Panama. They were arrested for their participation in a plot to blow up the university auditorium in Panama City with C-4 explosive while President Fidel Castro was meeting there with thousands of Panamanian students.

These terrorists imprisoned in Panama are receiving support from Miami. Money is being collected through public fundraising campaigns for their defense, with the use of Cuban-American radio stations. Pressure is being exerted on the Panamanian authorities and the legal defense of these terrorists is being arranged, while conditions are created for an eventual escape. There is no need to add that here, on the radio and in the press controlled by the Cubans of the far right, they are considered patriots, and not lowly terrorists, which is what they really are.

All of this is taking place in full view of this country's authorities.

A lengthy account could be given of the entire terrorist and paramilitary activities and the attempts on the lives of Cuba's political leaders organized from South Florida. With regard to the latter, in 1975 the Church Commission of the U.S. Senate compiled a partial list of those in which the CIA was directly involved, and for which it even resorted to members of organized crime. Such is their lack of ethics.

What choice do the Cuban people have for defending their sovereignty and their security? All of us here in this courtroom are familiar with the concept of "probable cause", used, among other things, for authorizing the use of certain means and methods in criminal investigations, for carrying out searches, making arrests, and so on. Who in the U.S. government can state here in this courtroom that over these last 42 years, there has not been "probable cause" to justify and legally support the investigation of actions initiated or financed from South Florida against Cuba?

In the course of our trial, the prosecution, in a blatant show of hypocrisy, threatened to use the R.I.C.O. Act against witnesses for the defense if they testified in this courtroom. Their goal was to keep the terrorist activities in which these gentlemen had participated from coming to light.

The R.I.C.O. Act, passed by Congress fundamentally to fight organized crime, has been in force for over 20 years. However, it has never been applied to a single one of the terrorist groups based here in Miami, although the government has all the information required to do so.

Here you have an example that there are in fact laws that would allow for these individuals and groups to be criminally prosecuted.

The problem is that, at the very least, there has been no political will to do so. If that political will did exist, many of the terrorist organizations that publicly operate offices in Miami would have been forced to shut down and their members would have been sent to prison.

This is just a brief summary of the reality that the Cuban people have had to face and with which they have had to live throughout more than 40 years. The Cuban people have the right to defend themselves, because up until now the U.S. government, which is responsible for enforcing the laws of this country and passing new laws if they are needed to combat criminal acts, has done very little or nothing to stop these activities against Cuba.

It was within this context that we reached the decade of the 90s. Cuba was facing the most critical economic situation of the last 40 years, fundamentally as a result of external factors. The terrorist groups based in Miami and allied with the far-right of U.S. politics believed that the time had come to deal the definitive coup de grâce to Cuba's revolutionary government. Thus, political actions and terrorist acts were simultaneously stepped up.

The Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF) became the Cuban community's most influential organization, due to its economic resources and the influence it exerted over key politicians in the United States' government structure.

Its strategy was to work towards the adoption in Congress of measures aimed at economically strangling the Cuban people, with the false hope that this would lead them to rise up against the revolutionary government, while at the same time, a wave of terrorist attacks against Cuba would be organized and financed from Miami, with the goal of damaging the already recovering economy.

This wave of terrorist acts against tourism facilities in Cuba was financed and organized by the CANF. The head terrorist, Luis Posada Carriles, acknowledged to The New York Times his responsibility for the planning of these attacks and the financing of them with money from that organization. In articles published by the newspaper on July 12 and 13, 1998, Posada Carriles tacitly admitted that he functioned as the armed wing of the CANF.

In that same interview, he explained that the U.S. authorities had made no effort to question him about the terrorist attacks on hotels in Cuba, and that he attributed this lack of action to his longstanding relationship with them. He literally said:

"As you can see (...) the FBI and the CIA don't bother me, and I'm neutral with them. Whenever I can help them, I do."

During the following days, the eminently anti-Cuban press in Miami would work to erase from the minds of the Cuban community the statements and serious claims published by The New York Times, pushing them out of the local media with something that constitutes an obsession within this community: a purported illness afflicting President Fidel Castro. It did not matter that the story was a hoax, and was dispelled within a matter of days. It had accomplished its objective of making the general public forget what had been published in The New York Times and the potential repercussions of the statements made to that paper by Posada Carriles.

But the FBI and other U.S. authorities should not have forgotten, as the above-mentioned articles were published on July 12 and 13 and, exactly 26 days before the publication of those articles, an official U.S. delegation, which included FBI officers, visited Havana where it was provided with extensive information, filmed footage and tape recordings containing evidence of the participation of the CANF and its top leaders in the organization and financing of terrorist acts against Cuba. Many of these materials were introduced by the defense as evidence in this case.

More than three years later, Cuba is still waiting for any FBI action to arrest any of the individuals involved.

On October 26, 1990, Mr. Angel Berlingueri, a FBI special agent from the Miami office at the time, was a guest on the "Round Table" radio show broadcast by WAQI, or "Radio Mambí". Coincidentally, this same agent participated in my arrest eight years later, and would subsequently testify in this courtroom.

He was a guest on the same radio station, with the same host and on the same show normally used to raise funds for actions against Cuba, for the defense of terrorists, and as a forum for anti-Cuban propaganda and political activity characterized by fanaticism.

That is where this FBI special agent appeared.

It is striking that in his comments and explanations to the public about the supposed activities of agents working for the Cuban government in South Florida, there is no mention of anything related to the national security of the United States. There is, however, acknowledgment of the fact that there are groups here in Miami plotting to overthrow the Cuban government. This violates the Neutrality Act, although it is clear that this issue was not brought up during the show.

On that very same radio show, this FBI agent acknowledged that actions and attacks against the Cuban government are perpetrated from Miami, and that the goal of the Cuban government is to remain informed of these plans. To top it all, the FBI agent bid farewell to his listeners by informing them that "we are fighting and we have the same objectives: for Cuba to be free as soon as possible."

As far as I know, the FBI was not created to fight for the freedom of any other country, nor is this one of its functions. However, these statements clearly highlight the political agenda of the FBI office in South Florida.

Coincidentally, these statements were made in October of 1990, precisely at the beginning of a decade in which terrorist acts against Cuba from South Florida would be stepped up considerably.

Statements like these, coming from an FBI agent and made on a radio station show with the above-mentioned characteristics, could only serve to encourage the organizers of terrorist acts against Cuba and offer them the security that they will not be persecuted for their actions.

Mr. Héctor Pesquera, the agent in charge of the South Florida FBI office, appeared as a guest of the same station, on the same show, and with the same host, just days after the verdict was announced in our trial.

In the face of these realities, what can Cuba do to defend itself and be forewarned of terrorist plans?

Can the authorities of the South Florida FBI be trusted when it comes to matters related to Cuba's national security?

Can someone who is here to look into the activities of terrorist groups and to prevent their actions in order to deter the death of innocent people be officially registered with the U.S. government?

What can Cuba do to defend its people, when boats leaving Florida loaded with weapons to attack Cuba are seized by the U.S. authorities, and those authorities are satisfied with explanations like, "We're lobster fishing"? We heard this in this very courtroom from an ATF agent who intercepted a boat loaded with weapons and maps of Cuba just 40 miles off its coasts.

On July 23, 1998, The Miami Herald reported comments made by terrorist Tony Bryant, who laughed over how he was questioned by FBI officials after his boat was found near Havana with explosives on board. According to what Bryant told the newspaper, he promised he would not do it again, and they let him go.

What can Cuba do when terrorists like Virgilio Paz and José Dionisio Suárez, who blew Orlando Letelier and Ronnie Moffit to bits in this country's capital and were then fugitives from the law, serve only seven years of their sentences and are then back on the streets thanks to the assistance of the CANF, which paid for their legal defense? I know of cases of reentry that have been given longer sentences than that.

The first words spoken to the press by one of these two individuals were to thank the CANF, Armando Pérez Roura and WAQI for the efforts they had made to get both of them released. This is the same radio station and the same radio show host for whom FBI agents Berlingueri and Pesquera appeared as guests.

The truth is that Cuba has no choice but to have people here, acting out of love for their country, and not for money, to keep the country informed of terrorist plans and to keep those plans from execution whenever possible. That is the reason for my presence here.

As long as the situation remains as I have described it, Cuba has a moral right to defend itself in the way that my comrades and I have done.

Your Honor:

On September 11, we were all witnesses to a horrific and criminal act. An ephemeral act which dismayed the majority of the world's inhabitants, who learned of these events through the television networks. The terrorist acts committed against Cuba for years have not been broadcast by any of those networks.

Allow me to recall that also on September 11, but in 1980, Félix García, a Cuban diplomat accredited to the United Nations, was murdered in New York City by one of the terrorists currently imprisoned alongside Posada Carriles in Panama.

In the outcome of the terrorist acts that took place in New York and Washington, the world's awareness of the need to eradicate terrorism has increased.

Barely hours, or even minutes, after these events, all of the analysts and high-level officials of this country's government were offering statements, information and viewpoints through the media. They all emphasized the need to speed up intelligence work and to infiltrate the groups that perpetrate such acts, as well as those who give them support and shelter.

I am convinced that the United States would feel proud of any one of its sons who had the opportunity and the privilege to prevent acts like the ones that took place this past September. Anyone who achieved this would have done a great service to his country and to humankind.

President Bush, in his speech to the joint session of the Congress on September 20, 2001, declared:

"Tonight, we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom."

Your Honor:

More than 40 years ago, my country and my people were obliged to wake up to the danger and called upon to defend their freedom. I feel proud to have been one of those who forewarned my people of such dangers.

Later that night, in that same speech, President Bush stated:

"We will come together to strengthen our intelligence capabilities, to know the plans of terrorists before they act and to find them before they strike."

Cuba, which has suffered terrorist attacks for 42 years, also has the right to defend itself in this way. Today, the American nation has joined in the fight against terrorism, something that has been a necessity and a reality for my country for many years.

There can be no double standards. Terrorism must be combated and eliminated whether it is committed against a big and powerful country or against small countries. There is no such thing as bad terrorism and good terrorism.

In the report on Orlando Bosch submitted in 1989 by Undersecretary of Justice Joe D. Whitley, whose administrative position made him less subject to political pressures or foreign policy considerations, this U.S. government official stated:

"The United States cannot tolerate the inherent inhumanity of terrorism as a way of settling disputes. Appeasement of those who would use force will only breed more terrorists. We must look on terrorism as a universal evil, even if it is directed toward those with whom we have no political sympathy."

Your Honor:

Today, you will conclude this stage of our trial and pronounce the sentence that you deem appropriate.

Finally, I simply want to reiterate that at no time did I endanger the national security of the United States, nor was this ever my intent, or that of my comrades.

What I did was inspired by love for my country, and by the conviction that history will register that this is the only choice left to the Cuban people to prevent the death of innocent people and the destruction wrought by the terrorist acts committed against my country.

It is up to the U.S. government to bring an end to these acts. Cuba has shown its willingness to cooperate with the U.S. authorities in this and other areas, like drug trafficking. This would serve the best interests of both nations, since it does affect the national security of the United States.

It is the authorities of this country that must decide to act on the basis of principles, and to shake off the destructive influence of a small but economically powerful group of mobsters and ultra-right fanatics from the Cuban community in Miami.

I sincerely trust that one day Cuba will have no need for people like me to come to this country, voluntarily and out of love for their country and their people, to fight against terrorism.

The first duty of any self-respecting person is to his or her country. Throughout the years of my imprisonment, I will always carry with me the dignity I have learned from my people and their history.

Thank you very much.

Fernando González Llort