

Media Disinformation: The Cuban Five and the Assassination of Fabio di Celmo: Washington's Double Standards

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The alternative media in countries such as the USA and Canada are trying their utmost to further break the silence regarding the Cuban Five. One such media is Radio-Montréal in Quebec. The host of the weekly program in French, *Le Monde, cette semaine* (the World this Week), André Pesant, invited me once again to exchange views with him about this case and inform the listeners of this popular radio station. André has consistently offered his program to allow guests to tell the truth about the Cuban Five.

He opened the show by outlining some of the history of the case, complemented by my input.

Together we provided the following information. The five Cubans were sent to south Florida in the 1990s in order to infiltrate terrorist organisations operating for decades with impunity against Cuba from that area in the USA. Over 3,000 Cubans were killed and 2,000 seriously maimed by terrorists activities in Cuba since the revolution of January 1, 1959. The Cuban authorities have continuously pressed upon Washington to stop this action emanating from their territory, but to no avail. The only choice open to Cuba was to gather the information and provide it to the US authorities so that action is taken against those responsible. This is what the five Cuban citizens did. However, when all the evidence was presented to the FBI representatives in Havana, instead of arresting the perpetrators of these crimes, they arrested the five Cubans.

André showed a great deal of interest in the kangaroo courts proceedings held in Miami despite the objections of their lawyer to the impossibility of having a free, fair and impartial trial in that city. Miami is the hot-bed for violent anti-Cuban action. The Five were also held in solitary confinement (the "hole") for 17 months after their arrest in Miami on September 12, 1998, unable to communicate with each other or their families. Their confinement prevented them from properly preparing for their defence.

The result:

Gerardo Hernández: 2 life sentences and the continued refusal for over 11 years to receive the visit of his wife Adriana Perez.

Rene Gonzales: 15 years and the continued refusal for over 10 years to receive the visit of his wife Olga Salanueva,

Antonio Guerrero: Life sentence plus 10 years, subsequently reduced in the fall of 2009 to

22 years.

Ramón Labañino: Life sentence later reduced to 30 years.

Fernando González: 19 years subsequently reduced to 17 years and 9 months.

The families of Antonio, Ramón and Fernando have to overcome one obstacle after another to visit the prisoners. In addition all five have been kept in the worst conditions in an obvious attempt to break their spirit: Gerardo, Antonio and Ramon are kept in high security prisons, while Fernando and Rene are in FDC (Federal Detention Facilities). The original trial coupled with the double punishment which consists of refusing appropriate family visits, violates US laws, jurisprudence and penitentiary rules. André was interested in the violation of international law regarding the holding of the jury trial in Miami. This law consists, amongst others of article 14 of the The United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states in part that “all persons shall be equal before the courts and tribunals. In the determination of any criminal charge against him, or of his rights and obligations in a suit at law, everyone shall be entitled to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law.”

Those who have taken a stand from around the globe: Parliamentarians (such as 56 members of the Canadian Parliament from Quebec and Canada), heads of states, trade unions (such as the most of the main unions in Canada and Quebec), student associations such as the Canadian Federation of Students, 10 Nobel Prize laureates, human rights organizations and innumerable personalities. On May 27, 2005 the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention also took a stand in favour of the Five. A record number of 12 prestigious “Friends of the Court” petitioned the US Supreme Court to revise the case which was brought to this highest court in the land by the Cuban 5 lawyers. However, despite the world-wide condemnation, the US Supreme Court refused to review the case in 2009. To add insult to injury, the Supreme Court did not give any reason for its denial.

André asked why the Cuban Five committee in Quebec is called the Comité Fabio di Celmo pour les 5. I explained that Fabio di Celmo was one of the victims of the terrorist attacks in Cuba, the very type of activity that the Cuban Five were trying to halt. In 1997 the Miami-based terrorists organized a program to disrupt the tourist industry on the island. Fabio di Celmo was in a Havana hotel when a bomb placed in the lobby exploded and killed him. Fabio di Celmo was a young Italian, living at the time in Italy as well as in Montreal. He had been granted residence status in Canada. At the time of his assassination he was awaiting Canadian citizenship. And so the Table de concertation de solidarite Québec-Cuba (the Concertation Table of Quebec-Cuba Solidarity) decided to name its special committee in honour of Fabio di Celmo. Some of his family, André noted, lives in Montreal. This is a fact, notably his brother Livio di Celmo. The self-admitted assassin of Fabio di Celmo and author of others actions such as the blowing up the Cubana de Aviación airline flight in 1976 which killed 76 Cuban civilians is Luis Posada Carriles. André read out portions of a New York Times interview with Carriles in which he actually takes credit for these activities. Carriles and others like him presently walk the streets in Miami, free as a bird. He even actively

takes part at this time in the current media campaign against Cuba.

And so the discussion invariably turned to the double standards on human rights and terrorism practiced by Washington. How is it that 5 Cubans are in prison for opposing terrorism, while avowed terrorists such as Carriles are in liberty? This and other similar examples, I stated, show the double standard and hypocritical policy of the USA. The family of Fabio di Celmo is understandably outraged by this double standard on terrorism and human rights, demanding that justice be carried out: Carriles should be tried for his crimes. This frustrating lack of justice is all the more reason to support the work of Committees such as the International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five which have organized a massive post card campaign. Tens of thousands of post cards are being sent from all continents in dozens of languages directly to Obama. In Quebec, the Fabio di Celmo committee organizes monthly pickets in front of the US consulate in Montreal and is circulating a petition. These actions and similar ones in Canada such as in Vancouver and Toronto all have one main goal: to force president Obama to use his constitutional right to grant pardon and free the Cuban Five. With the stroke of a pen Obama can do so. In the meantime, all the committees, organizations and personalities around the world are demanding the granting of visas on a humanitarian basis to Adriana Perez and Olga Salanueva so that they can visit their respective husbands imprisoned in the USA.

Arnold August is a member of the International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five and the Comité Fabio di Celmo pour les Cinq of the Table de concertation de solidarité Québec-Cuba.

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