

Terrorism, Cuba, and the structure of the lie



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By Charles McKelvey

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On April 30, Alexander Alazo Baró, a Cuban native who now lives in the United States, fired thirty-two shots with a semi-automatic rifle at the Cuban embassy building in Washington, DC. At a press conference on May 12, Cuban Minister of Foreign Relations Bruno Rodríguez reported that Alazo Baró left Cuba to settle in Mexico in 2003, where he was dedicated to religious work. During his life in Cuba, he never had legal problems or showed signs of mental instability. From 2003 to 2010, he visited Cuba several times, without problem, maintaining normal relations with Cuban consulates abroad.

Rodríguez reported that, according to information available on Facebook, Alazó Baró, sometime around 2010, became associated with the Doral Jesus Worship Center in Miami, where he met persons with known hostility, aggression, violence, and extremism against Cuba. Taking into account the long history of terrorist attacks against Cuban citizens and diplomats by right-wing extremist groups in Miami, Cuba suspects that his involvement with these persons may have led to the attack on the Cuban embassy.

The Cuban Ministry of Foreign Relations repeatedly has requested the U.S. government to explain what it knows about the affair. The silence of the U.S. government on the matter gives the impression that it indeed knows of the involvement of extreme right-wing groups in the attack, but it cannot publicly acknowledge it, because doing so would necessarily require distancing itself from such groups, which it does not want to do for political reasons. These groups form part of the right-wing populist base of the Trump administration, whose tactical support is needed in the November elections.

Meanwhile, the U.S. government has given a response of a different kind, posting in the Website of the U.S. Department of State the inclusion of Cuba on the list of states that are not cooperating fully with U.S. counterrevolutionary efforts. The State Department maintains that Cuba has denied the Colombian government demand for the extradition of ten leaders of the Army of National Liberation (ELN for its initials in Spanish) that traveled to Havana to participate in peace talks with the Colombian government in 2017.

The facts that are excluded in this State Department declaration reveal important details about the structure of the lie. It is true that the Colombian government had demanded of Cuba “the arrest and extradition of leaders of the Army of National Liberation.” But it is also true that the peace talks in Havana involving ELN and the Colombian government were sponsored by Cuba as one of the so-called guaranteeing nations. And that it was agreed in the negotiations that, in the event of the rupture of the talks, the guaranteeing countries ought to ensure the safe return of the ELN delegation to the camps of the Army of National Liberation. This is standard procedure in peace negotiations; the sponsoring country is responsible for guaranteeing the legal and physical security of the delegations in the negotiations.

The Colombian peace process is now ruptured. The implementation of the peace agreement between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC) and the government of Columbia has been interrupted. The government of Iván Duque, an administration different from that which initiated the peace process, in demanding the extradition of members of the ELN delegation, makes a request of Cuba that violates the agreement. John Petter Opdahl, Ambassador of Norway in Columbia, representing one of the guaranteeing countries of the Colombian peace negotiations, affirmed the correctness of the Cuban position. He declared to *El Tiempo*, a Colombian daily newspaper, that the guaranteeing countries have to ensure the secure return of the members of the delegations in the event of the rupture of the negotiations. Cuba has to honor, he said, an agreement signed by the delegations to the peace negotiations.

In the U.S. declaration, we see the structure of the lie. The U.S. government states a truth, that the government of Columbia has requested extradition of members of the ELN, and Cuba has not done so. But it omits mention of Cuba’s obligations with respect to the agreements of the Colombian peace negotiations, which when known, completely change one’s perception of the situation. The trick is to create a false impression mentioning one fact, that in and of itself is true, but leaving out other relevant facts.

I first came across the structure of the lie with respect to terrorism and Cuba in 1998, when I read in the *Miami Herald* of four “dissidents” who were on trial for their opposition to Cuban revolutionary government. When I arrived in Cuba, I discovered, quite by chance, that there was live coverage on Cuban television of said trial. The four were indeed on trial for their opposition to the Cuban government. But more precisely, they were on trial for expressing their opposition in the form of the organization of activities of sabotage and violence.

It’s what they don’t tell you that is the essence of the lie. One can only assume that it is done deliberately, to promote particular economic and political interests by generating confusion. The consequences of such conduct are nefarious, for how can the people decide, if they are confused by lies and distortions?

In the dissemination of lies, it is helpful to have previously constructed a fundamentally false frame of reference, as has been done with respect to terrorism and Cuba. There has been, on the one hand, the ignoring of the long history of terrorism against Cuba, much of it emanating from extremist groups in

Miami, supported by the U.S. government. At the same time, from 1982 to 2015, Cuba was placed on the list of state sponsors of terrorism, because of its support for revolutionary movements in the Third World. Thus U.S. public discourse is framed by unawareness that Cuba has been victimized constantly by terrorism, and by the suspicion that Cuba sponsors terrorism. This framing creates a climate of credibility for false impressions concerning Cuba's relation with the ELN, created by the omission of relevant facts.

The centers of power that have lied for years about Cuba are the same that have disseminated the lie of the economic virtues of the weak and limited state, through the same strategies of the omission of historical examples that disprove their anti-state thesis, and the highly selective and distorting presentation of other examples. In disseminating the weak-state ideology, they left the peoples without the capacity to defend their rights, including their right to an effective public health system. The consequences of lies that are designed to confuse the people with respect to the necessary role of the states in modern societies is now exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has provoked a call in many quarters in the nations of the North for an ideological reorientation. We therefore are entering a moment of opportunity and challenge. We need to formulate a collective, comprehensive, and creative vision and platform that delegitimizes the lies and effectively proclaims the truth, above all that fundamental historical and necessary truth, overlooked in the public discourses of the North, of the current struggle of the peoples of the Third World plus China to develop an alternative world that has emancipated itself from the historic processes of conquest, slavery, colonialism, imperialism, neocolonialism, and neoliberalism. Without such a comprehensive and universal truth, capable of delegitimizing the lies crafted by the masters of deceit, we cannot overcome the obstacles to future human development.

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