

Fabio Di Celmo: soccer player and victim of terrorism against Cuba

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Havana, September 4 (RHC)-- It's been 24 years but the Cuban people and sports remember Italian businessman and soccer player Fabio Di Celmo, who died victim of a terrorist explosion at the Copacabana hotel in Havana, Cuba, on a day like today in 1997.

Then as now, the United States was adding violent actions to the economic, financial and commercial blockade, with the aim of overthrowing the constitutional government of Cuba.

That painful event, which left Giustino Di Celmo without his son, "was part of a U.S. strategy aimed at curbing the development of tourism on the island", according to the official note published in the Granma newspaper.

"On September 4, 1997, between 12:11 and 12:31 pm, explosions took place in the Copacabana, Triton and Chateau-Miramar hotels, which caused material damage and the death of young Di Celmo. Later at 11:00 pm, another similar device exploded in the restaurant La Bodeguita del Medio", it said.

The newspaper reported that international public opinion immediately condemned the attacks, although, as was to be expected, in the United States the Cuban American Foundation, the Democracy Movement and Alpha 66 pronounced themselves in favor of these methods, while hypocritically saying they regretted the final outcome.

However, as soon as the events took place, the State Security forces began the investigations and that same day they arrested Raul Ernesto Cruz, a Salvadoran national, who -in the face of the evidence- admitted his guilt and confessed to having been trained, supplied and paid to carry out the sabotage.

For professional and also sentimental reasons, I accompanied Giustino to different activities because, despite the irreparable loss of his only descendant, his father wanted to show the world the truth of what happened and pay posthumous homage to Di Celmo.

With the coordination of the governing body of the sport, Inder, and the Cuban Football Association (AFC), ten months and 14 days after the crime, on Saturday, July 18, 1998, at 12:22 pm in this Caribbean country, in the same place of the fateful event, a plaque with Fabio's face, sculpted in high relief, was unveiled.

Very emotional and solemn, the activity was attended by members of the Italian Club Sciaborasca, where Fabio played; his father, the mayor of Cogolletto, Luigi Cola, together with INDER and AFC authorities, among them members of the national team and the children's movement Los Caribitos.

Thus, the national sports movement, the people of Cuba, the workers of the tourist facility together with Italian visitors and members of the team in which Di Celmo played condemned that tragedy and remembered the young 32-year-old businessman, in whose blood, heart and thoughts flowed an infinite love for soccer.

There it was learned that since his first visit to Cuba in 1992, together with his father, to get into his profession as a businessman, he was fascinated by the island, to the point that he returned several times a year because he admired the courtesy and kindness of the people towards visitors.

It was also argued at the event that "Cuba does not forget its friends. Cuba is grateful to all the people who express their frank feelings of solidarity, friendship and constructive spirit for a better world, where harmony, respect and well-being for all prevail".

There was special thanks to Giustino (now deceased) for maintaining a just position, for supporting Cuba, despite his father's pain, and for helping to make the world aware of the country's realities.

Likewise, the position of the Sciaborasca delegation from Genoa was acknowledged for the altruistic gesture of coming to the Antillean land to commemorate the nobility of a man and to censure the attitude

of a system that is capable of bringing mourning to families in order to achieve its political objectives.

And it was emphasized that the enemy did not achieve its goals, but extinguished the life of a simple Italian young man, full of dreams, who among his multiple business activities, found time to set up a soccer match and run after the influence of the ball with his Cuban friends.

As it appears on the plaque that was unveiled on July 18, 1998, today it is strongly reaffirmed: "Such barbarism of imperialism cannot prevent the people of Cuba and the family of the national sport from remembering you, Fabio".

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