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## Cuba: The Massacre of the Tugboat and the Message in Fatima

IBPP Editor  
bloomr@erau.edu

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Title: Cuba: The Massacre of the Tugboat and the Message in Fatima

Author: Lael Varella

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Abstract. This article was written by Lael Varella. Mr. Varella is a third-term federal delegate to the Brazilian Congress and a member of the present government's parliamentary coalition. He is one of the most active and energetic of Brazilian congressmen and is especially known for his speeches about international politics, education, and the social and psychological problems of youth. As well, he is an ardent defender of private property, advocate of individual free initiative, and opponent of socialistic agrarian reform. (This article has been slightly edited by IBPP.)

I would like to remember--with a note of disbelief--a crime committed by the Coast Guard of the communist regime of Cuba. The 4th lamentable anniversary of the crime was commemorated on July 13th.

In effect--according to documents of the Organization of American States (OEA) and various trustworthy publications--on July 13, 1994, a group of families were fleeing the prison-island of Cuba in a small tugboat. They were looking for freedom. Seven miles from the coast, the vessel was intercepted and attacked repeatedly by Castro's ships in an action that was clearly premeditated. While the tugboat--broken in two--started to sink, its passengers on deck were thrown to the sea by powerful streams of water from pressurized hoses. Streams of water with merciless power were directed towards the children, struck directly on their faces, and prevented them from breathing.

While the tugboat sank, Castro's vessels started to revolve around it in circles. This created a huge whirlpool that swallowed the shipwrecked people. Out of 72 people, 41 died because of drowning--among them 23 children.

Janet Hernandez, a survivor, gave this account: "Sometimes, I think that it was all a nightmare. But the hideous cries of mothers that lost their children, the little hands of children sinking forever to the bottom of the sea, and the crying that we shared, is real."

Commenting on that massacre, the communist dictator, Fidel Castro, said: "The coastguardsmen had nothing to do with it. They arrived a few minutes after the accident happened...". Instead, the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights, in its session of October 16, 1996, pointed clearly to the responsibility of the Cuban State in that crime that comprised a flagrant violation of two consecrated rights found in the American Declaration of Rights and Duties of Mankind--the right to life and the right to transit.

But this tragedy has been practically forgotten. I ask in the name of those who died for a prayer and a feeling of compassion. A prayer so that soon freedom will come to the Cuban people; and to the many occidental leaders, to stop "opening" to the dictator and instead open to the unfortunate inhabitants of the prison-island of Cuba as his holiness John Paul II asked.

I will request also in the plenary of the Brazilian Congress--as soon as it starts its activities after the current recess--that there will be one minute of silence in remembrance of those innocent victims.

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But a manifestation of respect, however just, of the Congress of my country does not seem to suffice. It becomes ever more necessary and pressing to proclaim to the entire world not only the horrendous crime that lays unpunished but also the actual situation of Cuba.

Denouncement is so needed and urgent, as there has been virtually no change in Cuban society after the visit of his holiness John Paul II. This is because of the revolutionary stubbornness of Castro. As Sebastian Arcos, son of a well known Cuban dissident who recently passed away, stated in Madrid as he received a posthumous award for his father: "Castro has exploited the visit of the Pope, to give an appearance of change in front of the International Community, that has hastily diminished its pressure on Cuba, when nothing has changed in the regime. Everything has continued to be exactly the same." And the executive secretary of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of Cuba (COCC), Father Jose Felix Perz Riera, has just declared: "There has not been any openness or any significant occurrences. To the average citizen, everything has been kept the same."

Catholics throughout the world also commemorate July 13 as a special date--linking the commonalities of the massacre of the tugboat with the actual situation of the Cuban people. It is the 81st anniversary of the 3rd apparition of our Blessed Mother the Virgin of Fatima in Portugal to three little shepherds. It is of significant coincidence that said apparition occurred on July 13th. On that same day, the Virgin prophetically pointed out that Russia would spread "its errors throughout the world," promoting "wars and persecutions against the Church," in which "the good will succumb to martyrdom." Those celestial words; don't they profoundly describe the Stations of the Cross of the Cuban people for which the massacre of the tugboat is but one chapter?

Our Blessed Mother, on the same occasion, had some words of hope that are equally important and without a doubt relate to the island: "At last my immaculate heart will triumph!"

May the victory of the Christian civilization as previewed by the Virgin--revered in Cuba under the invocation of the Caridad del Cobre--arrive at once to the "Pearl of the Antilles"

So I stated.

(IBPP Note: In an attempt to draw attention to the above incident, three boats organized by Democracy Movement, a Cuban exile group, left from Key West, Florida, on July 18 towards Cuba. A Democracy Movement leader, Ramon Saul Sanchez, was cited as not publicly committing to not violating the 12-mile international boundary with Cuban waters.) (See Bernal, G. (1985). A history of psychology in Cuba. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 13, 222-235; Calvino, M. (1998). Reflections on community studies. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 26, 252-259; De la Torre, C. (1997). La identidad nacional del cubano: Logros y encrucijadas de un proyecto (Cuban national identity: results and difficulties of a research project). *Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología*, 29, 223-241; Sorin M., & mujina, T.K. (1981). Desarrollo de actitudes vinculadas al humanismo, patriotismo, e internacionalismo en escolares cubanos (Development of attitudes related to humanism, patriotism, and internationalism in Cuban students). *Boletin de Psicología (Cuba)*, 4, 80-102.) (Keywords: Brazil, Cuba, Human Rights, Religion.)