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Who killed Facundo Cabral?

José Antonio Gutiérrez D.

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It seems incredible. Facundo Cabral was killed. The writer of free and libertarian prose. The singer-songwriter who survived a troubled childhood, jail and the never ending days of dictatorship. A survivor. He was killed just like that, in cold blood, 16 shots. Hitmen who weren't a fraction of the man Cabral was. In an interview given in September of last year, Cabral said, with certain clairvoyance, of hired assassins: *"Arseholes have always existed. Kidnapping and drug trafficking exist because there are assholes who don't have the balls to live their life so they prefer to kill."* They killed him in a cowardly manner, on the side of a street, ironically named Liberation, in Guatemala City. Various presidents (among them the extreme right-wing Colombian Juan Manuel Santos) came out to express messages of condolence. An odd occurrence given that Cabral never got on very well with presidential figures. Not one. In the same interview, Cabral said: *"I'm an Anarchist, which is worse than a Communist. For that reason I have never voted, I have never got involved in politics because politics divides and I separate myself from all that which divides. No one, no politician is going to change our reality."*

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Nonetheless, with his guitar in hand, “*This machine kills fascists*” as Woody Guthrie would have it, Cabral made politics throughout most of his life. Good politics, politics that shakes up indifference, that wakes up popular conscience, that makes us realise that we are not alone in the world, that rhymes with solidarity and that calls us to stand up and oppose the powerful. That was Cabral’s way, the illiterate child who grew up on the streets, who was educated in prison and never knew his father... That phenomenal heart that instead of hardening like marble when faced with the hardships of life, he grew more tender and acquired that understanding of the unfathomable depths of human beings that characterised his art.

Who killed Cabral? That is the question we are all asking. It was the hit men some say. Drug trafficking say others. A stray bullet one hears from the most cynical. A new victim of Guatemala, a “Failed State” vociferates the Argentinean press. But those who really killed Facundo Cabral were the very same to whom he sang his social criticism.

Who killed Facundo Cabral? The same people who mutilated and killed the Chilean singer Victor Jara. The same people who have reduced the Colombian singer-guerrilla Julian Conrado to a disappeared detainee.

Who killed Facundo Cabral? The same people who killed Guatemalan trade unionists. After Colombia, Guatemala has the second highest number of murdered trade unionists. 16 killed in 2009, 10 in 2010 and so far this year there have already been at least 5 murdered.

Who killed Facundo Cabral? The same people who barbarically killed 600 women in 2010 alone.

Who killed Facundo Cabral? The same people who kill hundreds of Mayan peasants each year so that they can take their land. The same people who force thousands more into displacement to make way for mining and agribusiness.

Who killed Facundo Cabral? The same people, who, after graduating from The School of the Americas, killed 250,000

Guatemalans, left 500,000 missing people and tortured and humiliated millions during the civil war (late 1950s to 1996) and who continue to kill to this day...

Who killed Facundo Cabral? The same people who, having the means to eradicate poverty, condemn tens of thousands of Guatemalans to the most brutal and harrowing of deaths: death from starvation.

There is no mystery to be solved in this case. The killers of Facundo Cabral were the rich, the powerful, the oligarchy, the capitalists, the imperialists, all the classes of people who constructed this "Failed State" in Guatemala. And they did it with generous support from Washington, without any change coming since the surrender of the insurgency in 1996 (Colombia take note of what awaits you if the conflict is resolved with a surrender according to the terms of the "president"). It was them, the powerful, who keep the hit men in business as they kept the death squad in business yesterday. These groups enjoy complete impunity which the army and the police allow them, duly trained and indoctrinated by the U.S.A. during the era of barbaric counterinsurgency.

The press releases shroud Guatemala in a cloud of smoke, as if the violence could be reduced to a mere question of drug trafficking and the mafia. "*The first Narco State of Latin America*" says Argentina's "La Nación" newspaper... Clearly forgetting that this dubious honour has been held by Colombia since the beginning of the 1990s. "*A country run by the Zetas,*" say other newspapers, forgetting that the oligarchic control in Guatemala is fierce and that the reality is that the entire land of Guatemala is governed by multinational companies who do as they like with the communities in place. Who is in business with the drug traffickers? Who do the mafia kill? What profit or riches are amassed through this violence?

When one starts to pose these questions in earnest, perhaps an answer to the question we are all asking can be found: Who killed Facundo Cabral?

For us you have not died Facundo of the enriching verse. For us you live on within those who fight, in those who think for themselves, in those who stand up and oppose dictatorships just as they do age old prejudices. Side by side with other minstrels of free song, such as Victor Jara, just as many others whose song is a never ending chain in which each link holds the song of the rest.

They believe that they have killed you, but they have simply elevated you to eternity. An artist who doesn't sing simply for the sake of singing never dies Facundo, never...