

And yet Cuban officials, in the very few times they have responded to questions about Varela, called Oswaldo Paya and other organizers insignificant and have ignored their constitutional duty to respond to the petition.

In a recent article in the New York Times, Paya responded by saying, "This may not be of statistical importance, and it may not be understood well outside Cuba, but as a sign it had great value and the government understood that well. The key to the Varela Project is the personal and spiritual liberation of people. No more masks. The regime did not respond, it fled."

Mr. Speaker, despite receiving extensive international attention for his efforts, life in Cuba has not been easy for Paya. Paya has received numerous obscene phone calls and has been subject to government surveillance. He was denied permission to travel to the United States to receive an award from the National Democratic Institute in Washington. And during the week he would have traveled, someone defaced his front door with red paint.

Other human rights leaders in Cuba connected to the Project have fared even worse. The president of the Human Rights Foundation, Juan Carlos Gonzalez Leyva, is in jail and faces a possible 6-year sentence for official disrespect and resisting arrest, among other charges, after protesting the arrest of an independent journalist in March. His group had been active in collecting signatures for the Varela Project petition.

Guillermo Farinas Hernandez, a psychologist in Santa Clara, said this week he expected he might face criminal charges for his endorsing the Varela Project at a local meeting last month where officials discussed scheduled National Assembly elections.

Paya has said the government's referendum, as well as the harassment of the Project's supporters, only further reflect the need for change in Cuba. To that end, Paya and other opposition figures continue to collect signatures and have formed a civic committee to direct the drive, stating that they wanted it to be a nonpartisan project to demand fundamental rights like freedom of expression, the right to own private businesses, electoral reform, and amnesty for political prisoners.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude talking about Cuba tonight and the Varela Project with one final note from the New York Times article I mentioned earlier. In response to foreign visitors that have suggested that things in Cuba were not as bad as in other Latin American countries that are plagued by poverty, corruption, and violence, Paya said only this, and I quote: "They ask if we are ready for change. What people are never ready for is oppression."

Once again I commend all those involved in the Varela Project, and I will continue to speak out in favor of the Project until the Cuban government responds in some way.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to turn briefly to Northern Ireland this evening because of my great concern about events over the last 2 weeks. I would like to initially urge British Prime Minister Tony Blair to take serious steps in preserving the peace in Northern Ireland. Mr. Blair must take immediate actions to ensure that the Good Friday Agreement does not fall apart.

Mr. Speaker, as you may know, on Monday, October 14, Prime Minister Blair suspended the power-sharing government of Northern Ireland. It is important that the agreement and the devolved institutions are reinstated as soon as possible. The Good Friday Accords, and more specifically the participation of all parties in the Belfast assembly power-sharing government, are the only real solution to lasting peace in Northern Ireland.

The only way for the agreements and power-sharing institutions to succeed, however, is for the Unionists to immediately accept equality amongst all citizens and parties in the north. The Protestant ruling parties must cease their stall tactics and work within the confines of the agreement to create a government that will be representative of all residents of Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland must also immediately implement all the Patten Commission's recommendations. The north must provide its citizens with a full, fair, and just reform of their police service. The PSNI, Police Service of Northern Ireland, must be representative of all ethnic, religious, and political groups in Northern Ireland. Prime Minister Blair should immediately demand the full implementation of the Patten police recommendations and ensure that Northern Ireland has a police service that is representative of all parties involved.

Mr. Speaker, I am quite worried that the Good Friday Agreement is hanging by a thread. These historic accords, which have shown the world that two parties which have battled for centuries can come up with an agreed-upon solution, are the only real way to preserve peace in Northern Ireland. And I once again urge Prime Minister Blair to reinstate the Belfast Assembly and take immediate action on the Patten Commission's recommendations on policing.

It is my hope these historic accords can be salvaged and a real and lasting peace will be preserved.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. UNDERWOOD (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today and the balance of the week on account of activities in the district.

Mr. MANZULLO (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for today and the balance of the week on account of illness.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Ms. KAPTUR) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. ETHERIDGE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BENTSEN, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. STRICKLAND, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. NUSSLE, for 5 minutes, today.

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

Mr. Trandahl, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled joint resolutions of the House of the following titles, which were thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.J. Res. 113. Joint resolution recognizing the contributions of Patsy Takemoto Mink.

H.J. Res. 114. Joint resolution to authorize the use of United States Armed Forces against Iraq.

SENATE ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

The SPEAKER announced his signature to enrolled bills of the Senate of the following titles:

S. 1339. An act to amend the Bring Them Home Alive Act of 2000 to provide an asylum program with regard to American Persian Gulf War POW/MIAs and for other purposes.

S. 2558. An act to amend Public Health Service Act to provide for the collection of data on benign brain-related tumor through the national program of cancer registries.

BILL PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT

Jeff Trandahl, Clerk of the House reports that on October 15, 2002 he presented to the President of the United States, for his approval, the following bill.

H.J. Res. 114. To authorize the use of United States Armed forces against Iraq.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 57 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, October 17, 2002, at 10 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows: