WHY IS CUBA BEING EXCLUDED?

Yesterday on Thursday April 3rd, at midday, I had an almost two-hour meeting with Daniel Ortega and his wife Rosario Murillo.

As I explained to Daniel in the letter I sent to him in the afternoon, I was pleasantly impressed with the meeting. I thanked him for the opportunity I had in learning about the details of his struggle in Nicaragua.

I expressed my sadness to him about the cadres who deserted and I recalled Tomás Borge, Bayardo, Jaime Wheelock, Miguel D´Escoto and others who had remained faithful to Sandino's dreams and to the revolutionary ideas brought to Nicaragua by the Sandinista Front.

I asked him to please send me news as often as possible in order to know about the ups and downs of a small Third World country in the face of the insatiable ambitions of the G-7.

I sent Rosario a copy of the book "The Geology of Cuba for All" that I received three days ago, a marvelous biography of nature on our island throughout hundreds of millions of years, illustrated with beautiful pictures and photographs, written by 12 Cuban scientists and constituting a literary jewel with its articles and analyses. I showed it to her and she had been very interested in it.

I chatted with Daniel at length about the "famous" Summit of the Americas which will be taking place on the 17th, 18th and 19th at Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad and Tobago.

Those summit meetings have a history which has certainly been rather dismal. The first took place in Miami, capital of the counterrevolution, the blockade and the dirty war against Cuba. That summit was held on the 10th and 11th of December in 1994. It had been convened by Bill Clinton, elected president of the United States in November of 1992.

The USSR had collapsed and our country was in the midst of the special period. The fall of socialism in our country as it had happened first in Eastern Europe and later in the Soviet Union was taken for granted.

The counterrevolutionaries were packing their bags for their victorious return to Cuba. Bush Sr. had lost the elections as a result of that warmongering venture in Iraq. Clinton was preparing for the post-revolutionary-Cuba era in Latin America. The Washington Consensus was in full swing.

The dirty war against Cuba was at the point of having a successful conclusion. The Cold War was ending with the victory of the West and a new era was dawning for the world.

The presidents of South and Central America enthusiastically attended the 1994 Miami Summit, heartened by Clinton's invitation.

President Carlos Menem of Argentina topped the list of South American presidents who attended the meeting, followed by his right-wing neighbor Lacalle of Uruguay, Eduardo Frei of the Christian Democratic Party in Chile, the Bolivian Sánchez de Lozada, Fujimori of Peru and Rafael Caldera of Venezuela. There was nothing strange about the fact that they pulled along Itamar Franco and Fernando Enrique Cardoso, his successor in the presidency, Samper of Colombia and Sixto Duran of Ecuador.

The list of attendees from Central America in Miami was headed by Calderón Sol, of the ARENA Party in El Salvador and Violeta Chamorro who, by virtue of the anti-Sandinista dirty war, had been instated by Reagan and Bush Sr. in Nicaragua.

Ernesto Zedillo was representing Mexico at the Miami Summit.

A strategic objective lurked in the background of this meeting: the imperialist dream for a free trade agreement reaching from Canada all the way to Patagonia.

President Hugo Chavez of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had not yet made his appearance at the summits until the year 2001 in Quebec; neither had George W. Bush with his sinister role on the international scene.

History decreed that José Martí, our National Hero and the champion of Cuban independence, would experience capitalism's first great economic crisis in the United States, the one lasting until 1893. He understood that economic union with the United States would mean the end of the independence and culture of the peoples of Latin America.

In May of 1888, the president of the United States had sent the peoples of the Americas and the Kingdom of Hawaii in the Pacific Ocean an invitation from the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives to an international conference in Washington to study, among other things, "the adoption of a common silver-based currency by each of the governments that would be enforced for the reciprocal trade transactions among the citizens of all the American states".

Certainly, the members of Congress must have studied well the consequences such measures would have.

Nearly two years after the International American Conference, of which the United States was a party, an international monetary union was recommended and, as basis for this union, the minting of one or more currencies that might be used in the represented countries.

Finally, after a month's delay, as Marti himself tells it, the United States delegation declared in the International Monetary Commission, in March 1891, that "it was a fascinating dream that could not be attempted without the agreement of all the other countries on the globe". It also recommended that gold or silver be used in the currencies that would be minted.

It was a premonition of what would happen 55 years later in Bretton Woods where the U.S. was granted the privilege of issuing an international paper currency, using gold and silver.

However, that event led to Marti drawing up the most impressive political and economical analysis I have ever read in my life, published in the Illustrated Review of New York in the month of May of 1891 in which he resolutely opposed the idea.

During my meeting with Daniel, he gave me a large number of paragraphs that are being debated about the final declaration of the upcoming Port of Spain Summit.

The OAS as the permanent secretary for the Summit of the Americas is dictating guidelines: it is the role assigned to it by Bush. It contains 100 paragraphs; it seems that the institution likes round numbers to sweeten the pill and give more punch to the document; an epigraph for each one of the 100 best poems in the lovely language.

Surely there are a great number of inadmissible concepts. It will be a litmus test for the peoples of the Caribbean and Latin America. Could it be a step backwards? Blockade and also exclusion after 50 years of resistance?

Who will assume those responsibilities? Who now demands our extinction? Could it be that they do not understand that the days of treaties excluding our people are a thing of the past? There will be important reservations in that declaration signed by heads of state so that it can be understood that in spite of the changes attained through tough talks, there are ideas which are unacceptable to them.

Cuba has always shown its willingness, in new circumstances, to provide maximum cooperation with the diplomatic activities of the countries of the Caribbean and Latin America. Those who ought to, know this well but we cannot be asked to keep silent in the face of unnecessary and inadmissible concessions.

Even stones shall speak!

Fidel Castro Ruz
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