

The struggle has barely begun

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Governments can change but the instruments they used to turn us into a colony are still the same.

For one president in the United States with a sense of ethics, in the last 28 years we have had three who committed genocides and a fourth who internationalized the blockade.

The OAS was the instrument for those crimes. Only its expensive bureaucratic apparatus took its ICHR agreements seriously. Our nation was the last of the Spanish colonies after four centuries of occupation and it was the first to liberate itself from U.S. domination after more than six decades.

“Freedom is very dear, and it is necessary, either to live without it or to decide to buy it for its price”, the Apostle of Our Independence taught us.

Cuba respects the opinions of the governments of sister nations in Latin America and the Caribbean who think in a different manner, but it doesn't wish to be part of that institution.

Daniel Ortega who made a valiant and historic speech in Port of Spain explained to the people of Cuba that the independent countries of Africa did not invite the European former colonial powers to be part of the African Unity. It is a position worthy of being taken into account.

The OAS was not able to prevent Reagan from unleashing the dirty war against his people, mining their ports and resorting to drug trafficking to acquire weapons to fight the war, with which he financed the death, maiming or serious wounding of tens of thousands of young people in a country as small as Nicaragua.

What did the OAS do to protect it? What did it do to prevent the invasion of Santo Domingo, the hundreds of thousands of people murdered or disappeared in Guatemala, the air attacks, the assassinations of prominent religious leaders, the massive repression against the people, the invasions of Grenada and Panama, the coup in Chile, the tortured and disappeared there and in Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and other places? Did it ever accuse the United States? What is its historical evaluation of these events?

Yesterday, on Saturday, Granma printed what I had written about the ICHR agreement against Cuba. I was curious later about the stance it adopted against Venezuela. It was more or less the same rubbish.

The Bolivarian Revolution's access to power was different from that of Cuba. In our country, the political process had been suddenly interrupted by a treacherous military coup promoted by the United States on March 10, 1952, a few weeks away from the general election that was to be held on the first of June of that same year. In Cuba, once again, the people had no other alternative but to resign themselves. Again the Cubans fought, and this time the result was very different. Almost seven years later, the Revolution emerged victorious for the first time in history.

With a minimum of weaponry, more than 90% of which had been captured from the enemy during 25 months of warfare backed by the people, and in the final offensive with a general revolutionary strike, the revolutionary combatants trounced the tyranny and took control of all its weapons and power centers. The victorious Revolution became the source of law just as in any other era in history.

That was not the case in Venezuela. Chávez, a revolutionary soldier like others in our hemisphere, became president by the rules of the established bourgeois Constitution as the leader of Movimiento V

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República, allied to other leftist forces. The Revolution and its instruments were yet to be created. After the military uprising led by him had triumphed, the Revolution in Venezuela might have possibly taken another route. However, he abided by the established legal norms within his reach as the chief method for the struggle. He developed the habit of consulting the masses as often as necessary.

He submitted the new Constitution to a popular referendum. It was not long before he became aware of the methods of imperialism and its allies in the oligarchy to recover and hold on to power.

The coup on April 11, 2002 was the counterrevolution's response.

The people reacted and brought him to power again when, isolated and incommunicado, he was at the point of being eliminated by the right wing which was forcing him to sign his resignation.

He didn't give up and resisted until the very Venezuelan navy released him and air force helicopters brought him back to the Miraflores Presidential Palace which had already been occupied by the people and army soldiers in Fuerte Tiuna who had risen up against the senior officers perpetrating the coup.

At the time I thought that his policy would become more radical; however, concerned for unity and peace, at the moment of greatest strength and support, he was generous and talked with his adversaries seeking their cooperation.

The response given to that attitude by imperialism and its accomplices was the oil coup. Perhaps one of the most brilliant battles he waged at that time was the one he carried out to supply fuel to the people of Venezuela.

We had talked many times since he visited Cuba in 1994 and he spoke at the University of Havana. He was a true revolutionary, but as he was gaining awareness of the injustice rampant in Venezuelan society his thinking took on greater depth until he arrived at the conviction that Venezuela had no alternative other than radical and total change.

He knows even the smallest details of the Liberator's ideas, a person he profoundly admires.

His adversaries understand that it is not easy to win when faced with the tenacity of a man who struggles without even a moment's rest. They could decide to take his life but his internal and external foes know what that would mean for their interests. There can be irrational lunatics and fanatics, but neither leaders, peoples or humanity itself are exempt from such dangers.

Considering it calmly, today Chávez is a formidable adversary for the capitalist production system and for imperialism. He has become a real expert on many of human society's basic problems. I have seen him in these days as he inaugurated dozens of health services. He is impressive. He forcefully criticizes what was happening with vital services such as hemodialysis, which used to be provided in private centers and paid by the State. The poor were condemned to die if they lacked the money. The same was happening with many other services; today, new facilities are available in the hospitals with the support of the most modern equipment.

He masterfully handles even the most insignificant details concerning national production and social services. He is on top of the theory and practice of socialism needed by his country and he makes great efforts through his most profound convictions. He defines capitalism for what it is: he doesn't draw caricatures of it; he reveals X-rays and pictures of the system.

We are dealing with a peculiar and horrible ensemble of forms of exploitation of human work: unjust, unequal, arbitrary. He doesn't simply talk about the worker; he shows him on television working with his hands, showing his energy, his knowledge, his intelligence, creating the goods or services that are essential to human beings; he asks them about their children, their families, husbands or wives, their kin, where they live, what they are studying, what they are doing to improve themselves, their age,

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salary, future pension, all the grotesque lies about property that are being spread by the imperialists and capitalists. He shows the hospitals, schools, factories, boys and girls; he provides facts about the factories being built in Venezuela, the machinery, figures on the growth of employment, natural resources, plans, maps, and he provides news on the latest gas discovery. The most recent measure adopted by Congress: the law nationalizing the 60 key companies supplying services each year to PDVSA, the state oil company, for a value of more than 8 billion dollars. They were not private property; Venezuela's neo-liberal governments created them with resources belonging to PDVSA.

I had not seen such a clear transformation into images of an idea, broadcast by television. Chávez doesn't just have a special talent to capture and transmit the essence of the processes but he accompanies it with a prodigious memory; it is rare for him to forget a word, a phrase, a verse, a musical inflection; he combines words that express new concepts. He speaks of a socialism that seeks justice and equality; "while cultural colonialism continues to live in our minds, the old will never die and the new will never be born". He combines eloquent verses and phrases in articles and letters. Above all else he has shown himself to be the political leader in Venezuela who is capable of creating a party, incessantly transmitting revolutionary ideas to its members and educating them politically.

I especially observed the faces of the captains and other crew members of the ships of the nationalized companies; their words reflect inner pride, gratitude for the recognition, security in the future; the faces of the jubilant young economy students who name him godfather of the promotion at the point of finishing their university studies when he tells them more than 400 of them are needed to move to Argentina, ready to work in the management of 200 new factories in a program agreed to with that country; they will be sent there at the end of their course to be trained in the production processes.

Ramonet was with him; he was amazed at Chávez' work. When about eight years ago we started our revolutionary cooperation with Venezuela, he was in the Palace of the Revolution, asking hundreds of questions. The writer knows the subject and he racks his brains trying to guess what will be replacing the capitalist production system. The Venezuelan experience is certainly filling him with astonishment. I have been witness to a unique effort in that direction.

It is a battle of ideas that has been lost beforehand by the adversary who has nothing to offer humanity.

No wonder the OAS is hypocritically trying to present him as an enemy of freedom of expression and democracy. Almost half a century has gone by since those chipped and hypocritical weapons came up against the steadfastness of the Cuban people. Today, Venezuela is not alone and it has the experience of 200 years of exceptional patriotic history on its side.

This struggle has barely begun in our hemisphere.

Fidel Castro Ruz

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