IT IS THE TIME OF MOBILIZATION, OF MARCHING TOGETHER

This Reflection is not addressed to the governments but to the fraternal peoples of Latin America.

Tomorrow, August 28, the UNASUR Summit will convene in Argentina and its significance cannot be overlooked. There, an analysis should be made of the concession to the American superpower of seven military bases in the Colombian territory. A rigorous secret had been kept on the previous talks of the two governments. The accord should have been presented to the world as a fait accompli.

In the early morning hours of March 1, 2008, the Colombian Armed Forces --trained and equipped by the United States—had used precision bombs to attack a guerrilla group which had entered a remote area of the Ecuadorian territory. At dawn, airborne elite Colombian troops occupied the small camp, killed the wounded and carried with them the dead body of guerrilla leader Raul Reyes. Apparently, in those days he had been meeting with young visitors from other countries who were interested in the experience of the guerrillas involved in an armed struggle since the death of liberal leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitan, over 50 years ago. Among the victims there were college students from Mexico and Ecuador; they were not carrying weapons. It was a brutal action in the Yankee style. The government of Ecuador had not received any previous notice of the attack.

This event was a humiliating action against the small and heroic South American nation absorbed in a democratic political process. There was a strong suspicion that the US Air Base of Manta had provided the information and cooperated with the aggressors. President Rafael Correa made the brave decision of demanding the return of the territory occupied by the Manta military base, in strict compliance with the letter of the military agreement with the United States, and recalled his ambassador from Bogota.

The concession of territory for the establishment of seven US military bases in Colombia poses a direct threat to the sovereignty and integrity of the other peoples of South and Central America with which our national heroes dreamed to create the great Latin American homeland.

The Yankee imperialism is a hundred times more powerful than the colonial empires of Spain and Portugal, and a complete stranger to the origin, customs and culture of our peoples.

It is not a matter of narrow chauvinism. “Homeland is Humanity,” as Marti claimed, but never under the domination of an empire which has imposed a bloody tyranny to the world. In our own hemisphere, the hundreds of thousands of Latin American compatriots who were murdered, tortured or banished in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and other countries of Our America all through the past five decades by coup d’état and actions promoted or supported by the United States provide irrefutable evidence of this assertion.

As I analyze the arguments of the United States to try to justify the concession of military bases in Colombian territory I cannot help but qualify such pretexts as cynical. The US claims the necessity of these bases to cooperate in the struggle on drug-trafficking, terrorism, arms-trafficking, illegal migration, the possession of weapons of mass destruction, nationalist outbursts and natural disasters.

That powerful country is the largest drug purchaser and consumer on the planet. An analysis of the paper money circulating in the US capital, Washington, has shown that 95 percent of the bills have been in the hands of drug consumers. The US is also the largest market and the main supplier of weapons to organized crime in Latin America, the same weapons that have killed tens of thousands of people every year south of its own borders; it is the largest terrorist state that has ever existed. Not only did it dropped bombs on the civilian cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and caused the death of millions of

people with such imperialist wars as those carried out against Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and other countries located thousands of miles away but it is also the largest producer and holder of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, chemical and biological.

The Colombian paramilitary, many of them former members of the Armed Forces, are part of their reserves and the drug-traffickers' best allies and protective force.

The so-called civilian personnel that would accompany the troops in the Colombian bases are, as a rule, perfectly trained former American military hired by such private companies as Blackwater, widely known for its crimes in Iraq and elsewhere in the world.

A country that respects itself needs no US mercenaries, troops or military bases to fight drug-trafficking, to protect the people in case of natural disasters or to provide humanitarian cooperation to other peoples.

Cuba is a country that does not have a drug problem or high rates of violent deaths that decrease every year.

The only purpose of the United States with these bases is to place Latin America within reach of its troops in a matter of hours. The top echelon of the military in Brazil was very upset with the unexpected news of the agreement on the establishment of US military bases in Colombia. The Palanquero base is very close to the Brazilian border. These bases and those in the Islas Malvinas (Falkland Islands), Paraguay, Peru, Honduras, Aruba, Curacao and others would not leave a single place in Brazil and the rest of South America beyond reach of the South Command, which, using its most advanced carrier aircraft, could get there within hours with troops and sophisticated combat equipment. The best experts on the subject have offered the necessary data to prove the military scope of the Yankee/Colombian accord. Such a program including the reinstatement of the 4th Fleet was designed by Bush and inherited by the current US administration from which some South American leaders are asking due clarification of its Latin America military policy. Nuclear aircraft-carriers are not required to combat drugs.

The most immediate objective of that plan is to finish off the Bolivarian revolutionary process and to ensure control over Venezuela's oil and other natural resources. On the other hand, the empire does not accept the competition of the new emerging economies in its backyard or the existence of truly independent countries in Latin America. And, it counts on the reactionary oligarchy, the fascist right and its control over the most important media, both internally and externally. Nothing resembling true equity and social justice will ever have its support.

The Latin American migration to the United States is the consequence of underdevelopment, which is the result of the plundering of our countries by that nation and the unequal exchange with the industrialized countries.

Mexico was forcibly removed from Latin America through the Free Trade Agreement with the United States and Canada. Most of the 12 million illegal immigrants in the former country are Mexicans; the same as most of the hundreds who perish every year along the fence separating these nations.

Amid the current international economic crisis, the rate of critical poverty in Mexico –a country with a population of 107 million— has reached 18 percent while more than half of the population lives in poverty.

The major source of concern during the life of Marti, the apostle of our independence, was the annexation to the United States. Since 1889, he had become aware that this was the greatest danger for Latin America. He always dreamed of the Grand Homeland, from the Bravo River to the Patagonia; and he died for it and for Cuba.

On January 10, 1891 he wrote in La Revista Ilustrada of New York an essay under the title “Our America” where he used such unforgettable phrases as: “…the trees must form ranks to keep the giant with seven-league boots from passing! It is the time of mobilization, of marching together in close ranks like the veins of silver at the roots of the Andes.”

Four years later, after his landing at Playitas in the eastern province of Cuba, and already in the territory held by the insurrectionists, he met on May 2, 1895 with the Herald journalist George E. Bryson who told him that in an interview with the celebrated General Arsenio Martinez Campos the Spanish officer had said that he would rather surrender Cuba to the United States than accept its independence.

Marti was so impressed by the news that on May 18 he wrote his Mexican friend Manuel Mercado the renowned posthumous letter where he wrote of “the road that is to be closed, and is being closed with our blood, of annexing our American nations to the brutal and turbulent North which despises them…”

The following day, heedless of the advice of General Maximo Gomez who indicated that he should stay with the rearguard, he asked from his assistant a revolver and charged on a well-positioned Spanish force, and then he died in combat.

“I have lived in the monster and I know its entrails,” he wrote in his last letter.

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