

THE TWO VENEZUELAS

Yesterday I spoke about the time when Venezuela was an ally of the US empire and the country where Posada Carriles and Orlando Bosch carried out their plans for the brutal in-flight bombing of a Cuban plane that caused the death and disappearance of all people aboard, including the youth fencing team that had just won all the gold medals at the Central-American and Caribbean Championships held in Venezuela. With the Pan-American Games underway in Guadalajara, we remember them with great sadness.

It was not the Venezuela of Rómulo Gallegos and Andrés Bello but that of the scoundrel, traitor and venomous Rómulo Betancourt. A man who was jealous of the Cuban Revolution and who, as an ally of the imperialists, cooperated so much with their attacks against our homeland. At the time Venezuela was an oil property of the United States and, after Miami, represented the epicenter for counterrevolutionary actions against Cuba. History recalls how Venezuela played a significant role in the imperialist attack on Playa Giron (Bay of Pigs), the economic blockade and countless other crimes against our people. It was the beginning of the dark ages in Venezuela that came to an end when Hugo Chávez was sworn in on the "dying constitution" held in the trembling hands of former President Rafael Caldera.

Forty years had passed since the triumph of the Cuban Revolution and more than a century since the Yankee plundering of Venezuela's oil, natural resources and sweat.

Many Venezuelans died amidst the ignorance and misery imposed by US and European gunboats!

Fortunately the other Venezuela exists, the Venezuela of Bolívar and Miranda, of Sucre and of a legion of brilliant leaders and thinkers who were able to conceive that great Latin American homeland of which we feel a part of and for which we have resisted aggressions and blockades for more than half a century.

"...so that Cuba's independence will prevent the expansion of the United States throughout the Antilles, allowing that nation to fall, ever more powerfully, upon our American lands. Everything I have done, everything I will do, is toward this end," wrote the apostle of our independence Jose Martí the day before he died in combat.

Included among us today is Hugo Chávez who is visiting a part of that great Latin American and Caribbean homeland envisioned by Simón Bolívar. Hugo Chávez understands better than anybody the José Martí principal that "...what Bolívar left undone, is still undone today. Bolívar has things yet to do in America."

I spoke with him at length yesterday and today. I told him about the great passion with which I dedicate the energy I have left to the dreams of a better and more just world.

It is not difficult to share dreams with the Bolivarian leader when the empire is already showing unequivocal signs of a terminal illness.

Saving humanity from an irreversible disaster is something that today may be compromised by the stupidity of any of those mediocre presidents who in the most recent decades have led that empire or by one of those increasingly powerful leaders of the industrial military complex that rules the destiny of that country.

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Friendly nations that have become increasingly important in the world economy —given their economic and technological advances and their condition as permanent members of the Security Council, such as the Popular Republic of China and the Russian Federation, along with the peoples of the so-called Third World in Asia, Africa and Latin America— could achieve this goal. The peoples of the developed and rich nations, increasingly sucked dry by their own financial oligarchies, are also starting to play a role in this battle for human survival.

Meanwhile, the Bolivarian people of Venezuela are organizing themselves and uniting to challenge and defeat the sickening oligarchy at the service of the empire that once again is attempting to take over the government of this country.

Venezuela, given its extraordinary educational, cultural and social developments, and its vast energy and natural resources, is called on to become a revolutionary model for the world.

Chávez, who came out of the ranks of the Venezuelan Army, is methodical and tireless. I have observed him over the course of 17 years, since his first visit to Cuba. He is an extremely humanitarian and law-abiding person; he has never taken revenge on anybody. The most humble and forgotten sectors of his country are profoundly grateful to him that for the first time in history there is a response to their dreams of social justice.

Hugo —I told him—, I clearly see that in a very short time the Bolivarian Revolution will create jobs, not only for the Venezuelan people, but also for their Colombian brothers, a hardworking people, who fought along with you for the independence of America, and of whom 40 percent live in poverty; a significant portion of them in extreme poverty.

I had the honor to speak with our distinguished visitor, the symbol of this other Venezuela, about these and many other topics.

Fidel Castro Ruz
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