

THE SUMMIT AND THE LIE

Some of the things Daniel told me would be difficult to believe if they weren't being told by him and if they weren't happening at a Summit of the Americas.

The odd thing is that there was no such consensus on the final document. The ALBA group did not sign it; so it was recorded in the last exchange with Obama in the presence of Manning and the other leaders on the morning of April 19th.

Chavez, Evo and Daniel spoke at that meeting with absolute clarity.

It had appeared to me that Daniel expressed a bitter complaint when, on the opening day of the summit, he said in his remarks: "...I think that the time I am taking is much shorter than the three hours I had to wait in the plane at the airport."

I asked him about that and he told me that six high level leaders had to wait on the runway: Lula from Brazil, Harper from Canada, Bachelet from Chile, Evo from Bolivia, Calderon from Mexico and he, the sixth. The reason was the sycophantic decision of the organizers to make space to receive the president of the United States. Daniel remained for three hours inside a hot LACSA plane, held up in the airport under the sweltering tropical sun.

He related to me the behavior of the main leaders present at the Summit, and the basic and specific problems of each of the Latin American and Caribbean countries. He didn't appear to be holding a grudge. He was sure, calm and understanding. I remembered the days of Reagan's dirty war, the thousands of weapons launched by that president against Nicaragua, the tens of thousands of dead, the mining of the ports, using drugs on the part of the U.S. government to get around Congress regulations forbidding the funding for that cynical war.

We do not ignore the criminal invasion of Panama ordered by Bush senior, the horrible massacre at El Chorrillo, the thousands of dead Panamanians, the invasion of little Grenada with the complicity of other governments in the region, all fairly recent events in the tragic history of our hemisphere.

In each of these crimes, the hairy paw of the OAS could be found, principal accomplice in the brutal actions of the great military and economic power against our impoverished countries.

He told me about the harm drug trafficking and organized crime inflict on the Central American countries, the traffic in American weapons, the immense market that drives that activity, so detrimental to the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean.

He told me about the geothermic possibilities Central America has as a highly valuable natural resource. He thinks that, in this manner, Nicaragua would be able to reach a generating capacity equivalent to two million kilowatt hours. Today its total electrical generating capacity, including the different energy sources, barely reaches 700,000 kilowatt hours and blackouts are frequent.

He spoke of Nicaragua's capacity to produce food, about the price of milk which is distributed for a third of what is charged in the United States even though salaries in this country are dozens of times higher.

Our conversation revolved around this and other practical subjects. At no time did I see him resentful, much less suggesting extremist measures in the economic area. He is well informed and makes very realistic analyses of what can and ought to be done.

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I explained to him that in our country many had not been able to hear his speech because of the schedule and the lack of timely information about the Summit; therefore I asked him to please explain the most interesting subjects related to the Summit on a television program, to a panel that would be made up of three young journalists, things that would surely interest many Latin Americans, Americans and Canadians.

Daniel knows of many concrete possibilities to improve the living conditions of the Nicaraguan people, one of the five poorest countries in the hemisphere as a result of the United States interventions and pillage. He was pleased with Obama's victory and he observed him well at the Summit. He didn't like his behavior at the meeting. "He would move all over the place -he told me- seeking out people to influence them, convincing them with his power and flattery."

Of course, a long-distance observer like me could perceive a strategy that was set up to extol positions that were most compatible with U.S. interests and most opposed to policies in favor of social changes, unity and the sovereignty of our peoples. In my judgment, the worst was the maneuver of introducing a declaration that was supposedly supported by all.

The blockade of Cuba was not even mentioned in the Final Declaration and the president of the United States used it to justify his actions and to cover up alleged concessions made by his administration to Cuba. We would better understand the real limitations that the new U.S. president has to introduce changes to his nation's policy towards our country, than the use of lies to justify his actions.

Are we expected to applaud the aggression on our radio and television air space, the use of sophisticated technologies to invade that space from great heights and the application of the same policy Bush had against Cuba? Shall we accept the U.S. right to keep up the blockade for a geological period of time until capitalist democracy is brought to Cuba?

Obama confesses that the leaders of the Latin American and Caribbean countries talk to him everywhere about Cuban medical services, and he nevertheless expresses that "And it's a reminder for us in the United States that if our only interaction with many of these countries is drug interdiction, if our only interaction is military, then we may not be developing the connections that can, over time, increase our influence and have -- have a beneficial effect when we need to try to move policies that are of concern to us forward in the region."

Subconsciously, Obama understands that Cuba basks in the prestige of its doctors' services in the region and even gives it more importance than we ourselves do. Perhaps he has not even been informed that Cuba has sent its doctors not just to Latin America and the Caribbean, but also to numerous African and Asian countries in times of catastrophes, including small islands of Oceania like East Timor and Kiribati, under the threat of being submerged if the climate changes, and that we even offered to send, in a matter of hours, a complete medical brigade to assist the victims of Katrina when most of New Orleans was helpless under the floodwaters and they might have saved many lives. Thousands of young people chosen from other countries have been educated as doctors in Cuba; tens of thousands more are now being trained.

We have been cooperating not only in healthcare, but also in education, sports, science, culture, energy saving, reforestation, protection of the environment and other areas. United Nation agencies could bear witness to this.

And more: the blood of Cuban patriots has been shed in the struggle against the last bastions of colonialism in Africa and in the defeat of apartheid, an ally of the United States.

And most important of all, Daniel said it at the Summit, is the total absence of conditions in the contributions of Cuba, that small island blockaded by the United States.

We didn't do it seeking influence and support. They were the principles underpinning our struggle and

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our resistance. The infant mortality rate in Cuba is lower than in the United States; for a long time now we have had no illiterates; white, black and mestizo children go to school every day, with the same opportunities for education, even those requiring special education. We have not achieved complete justice, but we have certainly achieved the maximum of justice possible. All National Assembly members are nominated and elected by the people; more than 90% of the people entitled to vote do so.

We have not asked for that capitalist democracy under which you were educated and in which you sincerely, and with all your right, believe.

We do not aspire to export our political system to the United States.

Fidel Castro Ruz

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