

THE COUP DIES OR CONSTITUTIONS DIE

The countries of Latin America were struggling against history's worst financial crisis within relative institutional order.

When US President Barack Obama -- while on a trip to Moscow to discuss vital topics on the subject of nuclear weapons -- was declaring that the only constitutional president of Honduras was Manuel Zelaya, the ultra right-wing and the hawks in Washington were making manoeuvres for Zelaya to negotiate a humiliating pardon for the illegalities attributed to him by the perpetrators of the coup.

It was obvious that before his people and the world such an act would be tantamount to his disappearance from the political stage.

It is a proven fact that when Zelaya announced he would be returning on July 5th, he had decided to fulfil his promise to share the brutal repression of the coup with his people.

Travelling with the president was Miguel d'Escoto, the president pro tempore of the UN General Assembly, along with Patricia Rodas, the Honduran foreign minister, a Telesur journalist and others, a total of 9 persons. Zelaya maintained his decision to land. I know for a fact that in mid-flight, when they were nearing Tegucigalpa, he was informed from the ground about Telesur broadcasting the moment when the enormous mass of people awaiting him outside of the airport was being attacked by soldiers with tear gas and automatic rifles fire.

His immediate reaction was to request that they took up altitude in order to denounce the events on Telesur and to demand of the commanding officers of those troops that they ceased the repression. Then he informed them that he would carry on with the landing. The high command then ordered the landing strip to be blocked. In a matter of seconds, motorized transport vehicles were obstructing the runway.

The Falcon jet made three passes, at a low altitude, over the airport. Specialists explain that the tensest and most dangerous moment for pilots is when fast, small planes -- like the one carrying the president -- reduce speed for touchdown. That's why I think that attempt to return to Honduras was audacious and brave.

If they wanted to put him on trial for alleged constitutional crimes, why not allow him to land?

Zelaya knows that it was not only the Constitution of Honduras what was at stake, but also the right of the peoples of Latin America to elect the people who govern them.

Today Honduras is not just a country occupied by a coup, but it is also a country occupied by the armed forces of the United States.

The military base at Soto Cano, also known by its name of Palmerola -- located less than 100 kilometres from Tegucigalpa and reactivated in 1981 under the Ronald Reagan administration -- was used by Colonel Oliver North when he was running the dirty war against Nicaragua, and from there the US government directed the attacks against the Salvadoran and Guatemalan revolutionaries that cost tens of thousands of lives.

That is the location of the US Joint Task Force-Bravo -- made up of personnel from the three forces -- that occupies 85 percent of the area of the base. Eva Golinger reveals its role in an article published on

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Rebelión web site on July 2, 2009, entitled "The US military base in Honduras at the centre of the coup". She explains that "the Constitution of Honduras does not legally allow for foreign military presence in the country. A 'handshake-like' agreement between Washington and Honduras authorizes the important and strategic presence of hundreds of US soldiers on the base, under a 'semi-permanent' deal. The agreement was reached in 1954 as part of the military aid the United States was offering Honduras...the third poorest country in the hemisphere." She adds that "...the agreement that allows the military presence of the United States in the Central American country can be removed with no notice given".

Soto Cano is also home of the Aviation Academy of Honduras. The components of the US military task force are partly made up of Honduran soldiers.

What is the objective of the military base, the planes, the helicopters and the US task force in Honduras? Without any doubt they are only adequate for use in Central America. The war on drug trafficking does not require those weapons.

If President Zelaya is not returned to his position, a wave of coups threatens to sweep away many Latin American governments, or these will be at the mercy of the ultra right-wing military, educated in the security doctrine of the School of the Americas, an expert in torture, psychological warfare and terror. The authority of many civilian governments in Central and South America will become weakened. Those dark days are not very far back in time. The military perpetrators of the coup would not even pay any attention to the civilian administration of the United States. It can be very negative for a president who wants to improve that country's image, like Barack Obama does. The Pentagon formally obeys the civilian power. The legions have not yet taken over control of the empire as they did in Rome.

It would not be understandable for Zelaya to now admit to stalling manoeuvres that would wear out the considerable social forces that support him and only lead to an irreparable attrition.

The illegally overthrown president does not seek power, but he defends a principle, and as Marti said: "One just principle from the depths of a cave can be mightier than an army."

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