

AN UPRISING AT THE UNITED NATIONS (PART I)

The session of October 26 last at the United Nations General Assembly, which is supposedly the top political authority in the planet, was convened for the purpose of discussing an item that has been reiterated for so long that it even sounds familiar: "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba." This has been the most debated and approved -although never implemented- draft resolution in the history of the United Nations.

We all know that if such an accusation was to be made against Cuba or any other Latin American or Caribbean country and the latter did not bother to take the hint, a rain of fire and hail would certainly fall upon the country in question. The abominable act that has been so clearly and accurately attributed to the "United States of America", the ceasing of which is being called for, has been described by International Law as an "act of genocide".

It has been already nineteen times since this draft resolution was first approved in 1992 by the General Assembly, calling for an end to that abusive and criminal action. But, while the number of times this Resolution was put to the vote and approved has increased, the group of countries supporting it has also increased, and the number of those who abstained as well as the minute handful of those which voted against has grown ever smaller. Last time there were only two which voted against and the three which abstained were small States that are in fact US colonies.

We must bear in mind the fact that huge changes have taken place in the world since the times when the UN was found and the battles of the Second World War, which took a toll on fifty million human lives and caused an enormous destruction, had not yet ceased. Many countries which today account for the majority at the UN, were still colonies of the European powers, which had forcefully seized most of the territories of the world and, in some continents, they had virtually taken over all them. In quite a few cases, hundreds of millions of persons of more ancient civilizations and of superior culture were submitted to colonialism by virtue of the superiority of the aggressors' weaponry.

Cuba was no exception.

Our country was the last Spanish colony in this hemisphere, given its wealth of the then scarce and highly demanded agricultural products, which emerged from the hands of hardworking free peasants and hundreds of thousands of African slaves. While all other Spanish colonies obtained their independence during the early decades of the nineteenth century, Spain still kept an iron grip and imposed its most despotic methods on its Cuban colony.

During the second half of that century, our Island, where Spain longed to have a stronghold for the reconquest of its former colonies in South America, became the cradle of profound national and patriotic sentiments. The Cuban people began its struggle for independence almost seventy years later than the rest of the Latin American sister nations, its only weapons being the 'machete', used to cut the sugar cane, and the spirit and speed of indigenous horses. In no time the Cuban patriots became fearsome soldiers.

Thirty years later our long-suffering people were at the verge of attaining its historical goals in its heroic struggle against a decadent, though stubborn, European power. The Spanish army, despite its huge amount of soldiers, was no longer able to secure the Island, since it only controlled the main urban areas and was about to collapse. It was then when the booming empire, which never hid its intention to take hold of Cuba, intervened in that war after cynically stating that "the people of the Island of Cuba

are, and of right ought to be, free and independent.”

After the war was over, our country was denied the right to participate in the peace negotiations. The Spanish government fully completed its betrayal against Cuba by placing it in the hands of the interventionists. The United States took over Cuba’s national resources, best lands, trade, banks, services and main industries. It turned us into a neo-colony. We had to put up with that over more than sixty years, but we gained back our independence and will never cease in our struggle. All these antecedents will help readers from other countries to better understand the words expressed by our foreign minister Bruno Rodríguez on October 26 this year.

The general debate began at 10:00 in the morning. The first speakers were the representatives of five countries who spoke on behalf of the Group of 77, the Non-Aligned Movement, the African Union, CARICOM and MERCOSUR, all of them in support of the Resolution.

Then, fourteen countries took the floor, two of them with more than one billion inhabitants each -China and India. They both account for almost 2.5 billion inhabitants. Others which also took the floor have more than one hundred million, such as the Russian Federation, Indonesia and Mexico. Another nine play an outstanding role in the international arena –so is the case for Venezuela, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Algeria, South Africa, Solomon Islands, Zambia, the Gambia, Ghana and Barbados. Nineteen speakers took the floor before Bruno.

His speech was lapidary. I will quote several times entire paragraphs of it. He began his speech by referring to the grave dangers of the war that threatens us, and added:

“In order to survive, it is indispensable for humanity’s awareness to take a leap, which would only be possible through the dissemination of truthful information about these issues which are hidden or ignored by most politicians, not published by the press, and found by people so horrible that seem to be unbelievable.”

“...the US policy against Cuba is devoid of any ethical or legal grounds and lacks credibility and support. So it has been evidenced by the more of 180 votes cast at this United Nations General Assembly which during the last few years have been calling for an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade.”

“Latin America and the Caribbean have vigorously and unanimously rejected such policy. The Summit of Unity held in Cancun in February 2010 resolutely stated the same. The leaders of the region have conveyed this feeling directly to the current US President. It could be assured that the express rejection against the blockade and the Helms-Burton Act, characterizes, as very few other items do, the political heritage of the region.”

“Equally unequivocal views have been endorsed by the Non-Aligned countries Movement, the Ibero-American Summits, the European Union and Latin American and Caribbean Summits, the African Union, the ACP Group Summits and virtually any other group of nations abiding by International Law and the observance of the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter.

“There is a broad and growing consensus within the United States society and the Cuban emigration in that country against the blockade and in favor of a change of policy towards Cuba. [...] 71 per cent of American citizens favor the normalization of relations between Cuba and the United States...”

“The sanctions against Cuba remain intact and are fully implemented.

“In the course of the year 2010, the economic siege has been tightened and its everyday impact continues to be visible in all aspects of life in Cuba. It has particularly serious consequences in areas so sensitive to the population such as health and food.”

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Then he described a series of cruel measures that seriously affect children with delicate health conditions. The US government could not give the lie to any of those measures.

Further on he pointed out as follows:

“The fines imposed by the Treasury and Justice Departments on American and European entities during the last year for their transactions with Cuba, among other States, have totaled more than 800 million dollars.”

He went on to report the following:

“The confiscation of a transfer of more than 107 thousand Euros that belonged to the Cuban company ‘Cubana de Aviación’, which was made through the ‘Banco Popular Español’ from Madrid to Moscow, was an outright theft.”

Our foreign minister then pointed out something of great importance about the effects of the gross crime committed against the Cuban economy, given the present trend of making reference to historical figures about the price in dollars of both movable and immovable properties, loans, debts or any other thing that could be measured in American dollars, without taking into account the ever decreasing value of that currency over the last four decades.

By way of an example I will refer to a well known soft drink: Coca-Cola –and I will not charge anything for the publicity. Forty years ago it cost 5 cents; now, its price in any country ranges from 150 to 200 US cents.

Bruno stated:

“The direct economic damage caused to the Cuban people by the implementation of the blockade during the last 50 years is worth more than 751 billion dollars according to the present value of that currency.”

That is to say, he does not fall into the same error of referring to the figure of losses caused by the blockade year after year as if the dollar value were exactly the same year after year. As a result of the global fraud meant by the unilateral suspension by Nixon of the gold pattern, whereby one Troy ounce of gold was equal to 36 US dollars, coupled with the unlimited printing of dollar bills, the purchasing power of that currency was dramatically reduced. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs took the trouble of asking a group of experts from the Ministry of Economy to make this calculation, the result of which being the total value of the economic damage caused by the blockade against Cuba all along these 50 years expressed in the current value of that currency.

Bruno continued to say:

“On September 2 last, President Obama himself ratified the sanctions against Cuba, claiming it was within the US alleged “national interest”. However, everybody knows that the White House continues to pay more attention to the well-funded “special interests” of an exiguous minority that has turned the policy against Cuba into a very profitable business.”

“Very recently, on October 19, President Obama described all the processes that are currently taking place in Cuba as ‘insufficient’ and conditioned any new step by his government to the internal changes they would like to see in our country.

“The President is wrong to believe he has the right to interfere and qualify the processes that are taking place in Cuba today. It is regrettable to realize he is so misinformed and ill-advised.

“The transformations we have embarked upon today are a result of the aspirations of Cubans and the

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sovereign decisions adopted by our people. [...] They are not intended to quench the desires or satisfy the interests of the US government, which until today have always been contrary to those of the Cuban people.

"The superpower will find any process that is not conducive to the establishment of a regime subordinated to its interest to be insufficient. But that is not going to happen because many generations of Cubans have offered and continue to offer the best of their lives to defend the sovereignty and independence of Cuba.

"Quite on the contrary, the US government has continued with its arbitrary practice of adding Cuba's name to spurious lists, including the list of States that allegedly sponsor international terrorism, produced by the State Department to qualify the behavior of other nations. That country has no moral authority to draft such lists. As a rule it is its name that should appear at the top of them all. There is no reason whatsoever to include Cuba in any of those lists.

"The US government likewise upholds the unjust conviction imposed on the Five Cuban Antiterrorists who have been imprisoned for more than twelve years in US prisons. Their cause has aroused the broadest solidarity within the international community.

"Cuba, which has been and still is a victim of State terrorism, calls for that government to put an end to double standards and the impunity enjoyed in its own territory by the confessed authors of terrorist actions which were organized under the auspices of the anti-Cuban policy of that country..."

At this point, Bruno dealt the US delegation the coup de grace, which was the famous memorandum by the former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Lester Mallory that was declassified decades after it was written, which shows the repugnant cynicism of the US policy. It read as follows:

"The majority of Cubans support Castro [...] There is no effective political opposition [...] The only foreseeable means of alienating internal support [from the government] is through disenchantment and disaffection based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship.

Every possible means should be undertaken promptly to weaken the economic life [...] denying money and supplies to Cuba, to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government."

Bruno kept on saying:

"Although the economic harassment has been the main obstacle hindering the development of our country and the improvement of the living standards of our people, Cuba can show undeniable results in the eradication of poverty and hunger, in the fields of health and education -which have become a world referent..."

"A few weeks ago Cuba was able to declare here it had largely and exceptionally complied with the Millennium Development Goals. These results achieved by Cuba are still a utopia for a large segment of people in this planet.

"Cuba will never cease to denounce the blockade; it will never cease to demand its people's legitimate right to live and work for its social and economic development under conditions of equality, in cooperation with other nations, without any economic siege or external pressures."

"Cuba conveys its gratitude to the international community for its firm solidarity with our people, convinced that, some day, justice will be served and this resolution will no longer be necessary.

"Thank you, very much", he said to conclude his first intervention.

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To be continued tomorrow.

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