

AN UPRISING AT THE UNITED NATIONS (PART II)

By Cde. Fidel Castro Ruz

After Bruno concluded his intervention around noon on October 26, the session, as usual, allowed some time for delegations to make an explanation of vote, before the draft Resolution was finally voted.

The first speaker was the US Ambassador Ronald D. Godard, Senior Area Advisor for Western Hemisphere Affairs, who was heading his country's delegation. His unusual speech spares me the analysis that would show that the denunciations made by the minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba were strictly fair. His own assertions are sufficient to reveal the cynical essence of that country's policy.

"The United States is firmly committed to supporting the desire of the Cuban people to freely determine their country's future."

"The United States of America has the sovereign right to conduct its economic relationship with another country. The U.S. economic relationship with Cuba is a bilateral issue meant to encourage a more open environment in Cuba and increased respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms."

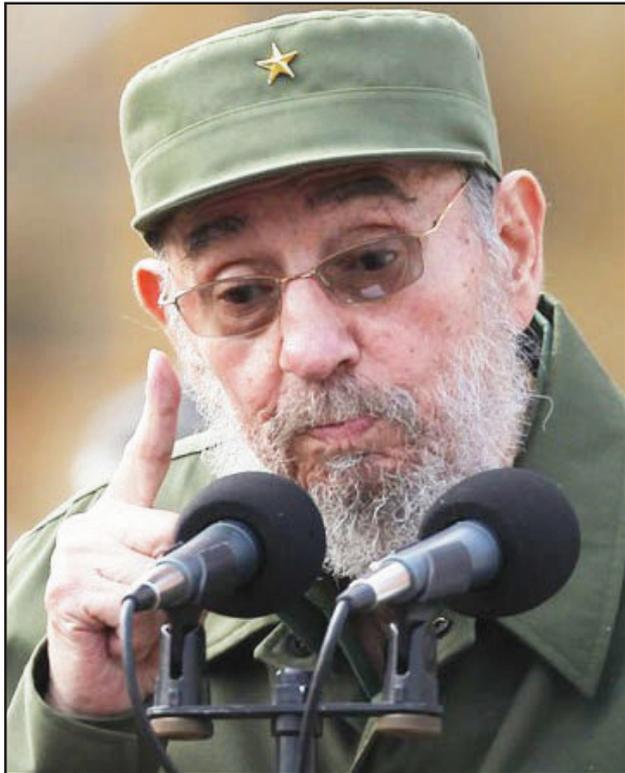
"We should not lose sight of that in a debate mired in rhetorical arguments of the past and focused on tactical differences—a debate that does nothing to help the Cuban people."

"My delegation regrets that the delegation from Cuba continues, year after year, to inappropriately and incorrectly label U.S. trade restrictions on Cuba as an act of genocide the United States holds no restriction on humanitarian aid to Cuba."

"The United States in 2009 authorized \$237 million in private humanitarian assistance in the form of gift parcels filled with food and other basic necessities, non-agricultural humanitarian donations, and medical donations."

"In April 2009, President Obama stated 'the United States seeks a new beginning with Cuba,' but 'there is a longer journey that must be traveled to overcome the decades of mistrust.' we have initiated talks to re-establish direct mail service between the United States and Cuba, and we have increased artistic and cultural exchanges."

"President Obama has stated publicly that the release of political prisoners and economic reforms are positive for the Cuban people. The United States hopes to see the fulfillment of these promises soon as well as a broader opening by the Cuban government to signal its willingness to engage constructively with its own



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people it is the view of the United States that a new era in U.S. Cuban relations cannot be fully realized until the Cuban people enjoy the internationally-recognized political and economic freedoms that this body has done so much to defend in other countries around the world."

"My delegation will vote against this resolution. Indeed, the United States believes that it is high time for this body to focus its energies on supporting the Cuban people in their quest to freely decide their own future and move beyond the rhetorical posturing that this resolution represents."

"Thank you, Mr. President." Soon after that, the head of the Nicaraguan delegation, whose people deeply suffered the dirty war imposed by Ronald Reagan which took a toll on so many human lives, made her explanation of vote. She made a forceful speech.

The draft resolution was put to the vote and 187 countries voted in favor; two countries - the United States and Israel, its inseparable ally in the commission of genocidal actions - voted against and three countries - Marshall Islands, Micronesia and Palau - abstained.

Not even one of the 192 UN member States was absent from the vote.

After the voting was over, the representative of Belgium, on behalf of the European Union, an ally of the United States, was the first to speak among all the delegations that were willing to make an explanation of vote.

Then, sixteen countries with an outstanding role in international politics took the floor to explain why they had voted in favor of the Resolution. They spoke in the following order: Uruguay, Bolivia, Angola, Myanmar, Surinam, Belarus, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Laos, Tanzania, Libya, Syria, Sudan, Vietnam, Nigeria, Saint

Vincent and the Grenadines and the People's Democratic Republic of Korea.

Allow me to remind you that many countries abstained from taking the floor at the request of our own delegation, in order to avoid the voting process from taking too long -to the detriment of the best timing to report on the debate- and the exhausting effort meant by the participation of a higher number of speakers. In spite of that, 37 delegations spoke in crystal-clear and accurate terms in favor of the just draft resolution that had been adopted for the nineteenth time by the UN General Assembly. This was the longest and most vigorous debate on this delicate and important item.

Cuba's reply was heard in the voice of the minister for Foreign Affairs of our country at 4:17 p.m.

The essence of what he said - although almost his entire speech was essential- was the following:

"Mr. President;

"I highly appreciate the words expressed by the thirteen speakers and the presence of all the delegations attending this unexpected afternoon session.

"Regarding what was said by the representatives of the United States and the European Union I have to say the following:

"This is the nineteenth time that the US delegation repeats the same argument. The blockade is an act of economic warfare and an act of genocide.

"Hasn't the State Department done its homework? Hasn't it examined this issue?"

"Last year I read here the Articles of the relevant Conventions."

"I already read here the famous Memorandum that was drafted by Mr. Mallory.

"These are not 'ideological arguments' of the past. The blockade is an old ice floe reminiscent of the Cold War. The point is not the rhetoric but the act of aggression against Cuba.

"The purpose of the United

States is not to support or assist the Cuban people. It is known that the blockade causes hardships and sufferings. It does not cause deaths because the Cuban Revolution prevents that from happening. How could anybody explain the fact that Cuban children are punished in the way that has been described here? If there is really a will to support or assist the Cuban people, the only thing that needs to be done is to lift the blockade immediately.

"Why are American citizens forbidden to visit Cuba and receive first-hand information? Why are there restrictions on the so called 'people to people' contacts?"

"The pretexts used to apply the blockade have been changing. First it was our alleged participation in the Sino-Soviet axis; then the so-called export of the Revolution to Latin America; then the presence of Cuban troops in Africa that were there to contribute to defeat the Apartheid regime, preserve the independence of Angola and attain the independence of Namibia.

"Afterwards there was a manipulation of the human rights issue. But the blockade is a brutal violation of the human rights of Cubans.

"We are ready to discuss about human rights violations. We could begin speaking about the concentration camp in Guantánamo, where inmates are submitted to tortures and there is no habeas corpus. That is the realm of 'Military Commissions' outside the rule of law. Could the US delegation explain what happened at the Abu Ghraib, Bagram and Nama camps?"

"Were the responsible indicted? Were the members of the European governments who authorized the creation of secret prisons in Europe and the secret renditions by the CIA indicted? Could the European Union representative shed more light on that issue?"

"We could speak about Wikileaks. Why don't you tell us something about the atrocities described in the more than 75 000 documents about the crimes in Afghanistan and in the 400 000 documents about Iraq?"

"The changes in Cuba are only incumbent to Cubans. We will change everything that needs to be changed, for the benefit of Cubans, but we will not ask the US government's opinion. We freely chose our destiny. That is why we made the Revolution. Those changes will be made in a sovereign way; they will not be 'gestures'. We know that the only thing the US would consider sufficient would be the establishment of a pro-Yankee government in Cuba; but that is not going to happen."

Does the United States want

to see cooperation between their universities and ours? Let them eliminate the restrictions on the exchange between academics, students, scientists as well as cultural exchanges; let them allow the signing of agreements between those institutions.

"Do they want to see cooperation against drug-trafficking, terrorism, traffic in persons, natural disasters and postal services? Let them respond at least to the proposals that we presented to them over a year ago without any condition whatsoever."

"A USAID high official confirmed yesterday to the journalist Tracey Eaton that, during the last period, they have conveyed 15.6 million dollars to -and I quote- 'individuals on the ground in Cuba'. This is how they call their mercenaries.

"Illegal radio and TV broadcasts remain the same.

"The Five Cuban Antiterrorists continue serving an unjust imprisonment sentence. Recently and for no reason Gerardo Hernández Nordelo was placed in solitary confinement and he was denied medical assistance.

"Confessed international terrorists like Orlando Bosh and Posada Carriles are walking freely down the streets of Miami and even carrying out their political activities there."

"The blockade is abusively extraterritorial and affects all countries represented here. It is not a bilateral issue.

"Mr. President;

"I have very little to add to what was said by the representative of the European Union here.

"The European Union has no moral or political authority whatsoever to make any criticism regarding human rights.

"The EU would rather take care of its brutal anti-immigrant policy, the deportation of ethnic minority citizens, the violent repression against demonstrators and the increasing social exclusion of its unemployed and low-income sectors.

"The European Parliament, in a shameless and infamous way, devotes itself to reward the US government paid stooges in Cuba."

"But the European Union is delusional when it thinks it could normalize relations with Cuba while the Common Position is still in place.

"Thank you, very much."

We all expected to hear the rejoinder by the US representative to Bruno's reply. The best thing he and his delegation - which did not engage in the contemptuous gesture of leaving the room- could do was to firmly withstand that volley of irrefutable arguments. Cuba's reply left them paralyzed. I had the feeling that they were gradually fading away until they completely disappeared from

the scene.

During the 50 years of blockade the superpower has not been able to defeat the Cuban Revolution- nor will it be. I did not focus on the exercise of counting the number of votes in favor of or against the "Resolution".

Instead I observed the warmth and the convictions of those who spoke against that unjust and arbitrary measure. It would be wrong to believe that this measure could stay in place forever. That was an uprising. Peoples are sick and tired of aggressions, plundering, abuses and deceptions.

Never had the attending delegations expressed more vigorously their protest against the mockery meant by the contempt against the just denunciation by the international community against an act of genocide that is reiterated year after year. They are aware of the fact that the most serious thing is the systematic plundering of their natural resources imposed on most of the peoples in this planet, the ever increasing lack of foodstuffs, the destruction of the environment, the increasing number of genocidal wars against other peoples, with the support of military bases placed in more than 75 countries and the increasing risk of a suicidal war for all peoples of the world.

The United Nations can not exist without the presence of the peoples that have been calling for an end to the blockade. What would be the use of that body, which was founded at a time when an overwhelming majority of countries were not even independent, without our presence?"

What rights do we have if we can not even call for an end to the blockade imposed against a small country? One way or another they have subordinated us to the interests of the United States and NATO, a belligerent military organization that wastes more than one trillion dollars every year in wars and weapons, an amount of money that would be more than enough to satisfy the basic needs of all peoples of the world.

Many Third World countries are forced to find solutions regardless of what might happen to others; it is like walking on a treadmill that is moving in reverse at a higher speed.

We need a truly democratic United Nations, not an imperial domain where the overwhelming majority of peoples does not count. The United Nations, founded before the end of the Second World War, is already exhausted. Let us not allow them to impose on us the ridiculous role of gathering once again within 12 months so that they could laugh at us. Let us make our demand be felt. Let us save the life of our species before it is too late.