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www.fte-energia.org | prensa@fte-energia.org | <http://twitter.com/ftenergia>
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The world half a century later

REFLECTIONS OF COMRADE FIDEL CASTRO



AS the Revolution celebrated its 51st anniversary two days ago, memories of that January 1st of 1959 came to mind. The outlandish idea that, after half a century - which flew by - we would remember it as if it were yesterday, never occurred to any of us.

During the meeting at the Oriente sugar mill on December 28, 1958, with the commander in chief of the enemy's forces, whose elite units were surrounded without any way out whatsoever, he admitted defeat and appealed to our generosity to find a dignified way out for the rest of his forces. He knew of our

humane treatment of prisoners and the injured without any exception. He accepted the agreement that I proposed, although I warned him that operations under way would continue. But he traveled to the capital, and, incited by the United States embassy, instigated a coup d'état.

We were preparing for combat on that January 1st when, in the early hours of the morning, the news came in of the dictator's flight. The Rebel Army was ordered not to permit a ceasefire and to continue battling on all fronts. Radio Rebelde convened workers

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to a revolutionary general strike, immediately followed by the entire nation. The coup attempt was defeated, and that same afternoon, our victorious troops entered Santiago de Cuba.

Che and Camilo received instructions to advance rapidly by road in motor vehicles with their battle-hardened forces toward La Cabaña and the Columbia military camp. The enemy army, hit hard on all fronts, was unable to resist. The people in arms themselves took over the centers of repression and police stations. In the afternoon of January 2 at a stadium in Bayamo, and accompanied by a small escort, I met with more than 2,000 soldiers from the tank, artillery and motorized infantry units, against whom we had been fighting until the day before. They were still carrying their weapons. We had won the enemy's respect with our audacious but humanitarian methods of irregular warfare. This was how, in just four days — after 25 months of war that we reinitiated with a few guns — some 100,000 air, sea and ground weapons and the entire power of the state remained in the hands of the Revolution. In just a few lines, I am recounting everything that happened during those days 51 years ago.

Then the main battle began: to preserve Cuba's independence against the most powerful empire that has ever existed, a battle which our people waged with great dignity. I am happy today to observe those who, in the face of incredible obstacles, sacrifices, and risks, were able to defend our homeland, and who today, together with their children, parents and loved ones, are enjoying the happiness and glories of each new year.

Today, however, is nothing like yesterday. We experienced a new era unlike any other in history. Before, the people fought and are fighting still, with honor, for a better and more just world, but now they are also having to fight, without any alternative whatsoever, for the very survival of our species. If we ignore this, we know absolutely nothing. Cuba is, without question, one of the most

politically instructed countries on the planet; it started out from the most shameful illiteracy, and what is worse, our *yanki* masters and the bourgeoisie associated with the foreign owners of land, sugar mills, production plants for consumer goods, warehouses, businesses, electricity, telephones, banks, mines, insurance, docks, bars, hotels, offices, houses, theaters, print shops, magazines, newspapers, radio, the emerging television, and everything of important value.

After the ardent flames of our battles for freedom had been quenched, the *yankis* had taken upon themselves the task of thinking for a people that struggled so hard to be the masters of their independence, resources and destiny. Absolutely nothing, not even the task of thinking politically, belonged to us. How many of us knew how to read and write? How many of us even made it to sixth grade? I recall that especially on a day like today, because that was the country that was supposed to belong to the Cuban people. I will not list anything more, because I would have to include much more, including the best schools, the best hospitals, the best houses, the best doctors, the best lawyers. How many of us had a right to that? Which of us possessed, with some exceptions, the natural and divine right to be administrators and leaders?

Every millionaire and rich individual, without exception, was a party leader, senator, representative or important official. That was the representative and pure democracy that prevailed in our country, except that the *yankis* imposed, at their whim, merciless and cruel petty dictators whenever it was more convenient for them to better defend their properties against landless campesinos and workers with or without jobs. Given that nobody even talks about that anymore, I am venturing to remember it. Our country is one of more than 150 that constitute the Third World, which would be the first but not the only nations destined to suffer incredible consequences if humanity does not become aware, clearly, certainly and a lot more

quickly than we thought, of the reality and consequences of the climate change caused by human beings if it is not prevented in time.

Our mass media has dedicated spaces to describing the effects of climate change. Increasingly violent hurricanes, droughts and other natural disasters have likewise contributed to the education of our people on this subject. One singular event, the battle over the climate issue that took place at the Copenhagen Summit, has contributed to knowledge of the imminent danger. It is not a matter of a distant threat for the 22nd century, but for the 21st; nor is it just for the latter half of this century, but for the coming decades, in which we will begin to suffer its terrible consequences.

It is also not just a question of simple action against the empire and its henchmen, which in this issue, like in everything else, are trying to impose their own stupid and egotistic interests, but a battle of world opinion that that cannot be left to spontaneity or the whims of the majority of their mass media. It is a situation with which, fortunately, millions of honorable and brave people in the world are familiar, a battle to wage with the masses and within social organizations and scientific, cultural, humanitarian and other international institutions, most especially in the heart of the United Nations, where the United States government, its NATO allies and the richest countries tried to effect a fraudulent and antidemocratic coup in Denmark against the rest of the emerging and poor countries of the Third World.

In Copenhagen, the Cuban delegation, which attended together with others from the ALBA and the Third World, was forced into a fight to the finish in the face of the incredible events that began with the speech of the *yanki* president, Barack Obama, and of the group of the richest states on the planet, resolved to dismantle the binding commitments of Kyoto — where the thorny problem was discussed more than 12 years ago — and to load the burden of sacrifice onto the emerging and underdeveloped countries, which are the

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poorest and at the same time the principal suppliers of the planet's raw materials and non-renewable resources to the most developed and opulent countries.

In Copenhagen, Obama appeared on the last day of the conference, which began on December 7. The worst aspect of his conduct was that, after he had decided to dispatch 30,000 soldiers to the slaughter of Afghanistan — a country with a strong tradition of independence, which not even the English in their better and cruellest times could dominate — he went to Oslo to receive no less than a Nobel Peace Prize. He arrived in the Norwegian capital on December 10 and gave an empty, demagogic and justifying speech. On the 18th, the date of the Summit's last session, he appeared in Copenhagen, where he planned to remain for just 8 hours. His secretary of state and a select group of his best strategists had arrived the previous day.

The first thing that Obama did was to select a group of guests who were given the honor of accompanying him as he gave a speech at the Summit. The complacent and fawning Danish prime minister, who was presiding over the Summit, gave the podium over to a group that numbered just 15. The imperial chief deserved special honors. His speech was a was a combination of sweetened words seasoned with theatrical gestures, already boring for those of us, like me, assigned themselves the task of listening to him in order to try and be objective in an appreciation of his characteristics and political intentions. Obama imposed on his docile Danish host, so that only his guests could speak, although as soon as he had made his own comments, he "made himself scarce" through the back door, like an imp escaping from an audience which had done him the honor of listening with interest.

Once the authorized list of speakers was finished, an indigenous man, Aymara through and through, Evo Morales, president of Bolivia, who had just been reelected with 65% of the vote, demanded the right to speak, which was granted, to the resounding

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applause of those present. In just nine minutes, he expressed profound and dignified concepts in response to the words of the absent U.S. president. Immediately afterward, Hugo Chávez got up to ask to speak on behalf of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; the person presiding over the session had no choice but to also give him the right to speak, and he used that to improvise one of the most brilliant speeches that I've ever heard. When he finished, a strike of the gavel ended the unusual session.

The extremely busy Obama and his entourage however, did not have a minute to lose. His group had put together a draft statement, full of vagueness, which was the negation of the Kyoto Protocol. After he dashed out of the plenary session, Obama met with other groups of guests numbering no more than 30, negotiated in private and in groups; insisted; mentioned figures to the tune of millions of green bills without gold backing and which are constantly being devaluated, and even threatened to leave the meeting if his demands were not met. Worst of all, it was a meeting of super-rich countries, to which several of the most important emerging nations were invited and two or three poor ones, to which he submitted the document as if proposing, "take it or leave it!"

The Danish prime minister tried to present that confusing, ambiguous and contradictory statement – in the discussion of which the UN did not participate in any way – as the Summit agreement. The Summit sessions had already concluded, almost all of the heads of state and government and foreign ministers had left for their respective countries and, at three in the morning, the distinguished Danish prime minister presented it to the plenary session, where hundreds of long-suffering officials who hadn't slept for three days, received the thorny document, and were given only one hour to discuss and approve it.

That is when the meeting became fiery; the delegates hadn't even had time to read it. A number of them asked to speak. The first was

the delegate from Tuvalu, whose islands would be inundated if what was proposed there was approved; those of Bolivia, Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua followed him. The dialectical confrontation at 3 a.m. on that December 19 is worthy of going down in history, if history should continue after climate change.

As a large part of what happened is known in Cuba, or is on internet web pages, I will confine myself to partially expounding on the two responses of Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez, worthy of being recorded in order to know the last episodes of the Copenhagen soap opera, and aspects of the final chapter, which are still to be published in our country.

"Mr. President (Prime Minister of Denmark)... The document that you affirmed on various occasions did not exist, has now appeared. We have all seen versions circulating surreptitiously and being discussed in small and secret meetings outside the conference halls in which the international community, via its representatives, is negotiating in a transparent manner."

"I add my voice to those of the representatives of Tuvalu, Venezuela and Bolivia. Cuba considers the text of this apocryphal draft as extremely insufficient and inadmissible..."

"The document which you are presenting, lamentably, does not contain any commitment whatsoever to reducing greenhouse gas emissions."

"I am aware of prior versions which, in questionable and clandestine procedures, were also being negotiated behind closed doors and which talked of a reduction of at least 50% by the year 2050..."

"The document that you have presented now, precisely omits the already meager and insufficient key phrases that that version contained. This document does not guarantee,

in any way, the adoption of minimal measures that would make it possible to avert an extremely grave disaster for the planet and the human species."

"This shameful document that you have brought is likewise ommissive and ambiguous in relation to the specific commitment to emission reductions on the part of the developed countries, those responsible for global warming given the historic and current level of their emissions, and on whom it falls to implement substantial reductions immediately. This paper does not contain one single word of commitment on the part of the developed countries."

"... Your role, Mr. President, is the death certificate of the Kyoto Protocol, which my delegation does not accept."

"The Cuban delegation wishes to emphasize the preeminence of the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities' as the central concept of the future negotiation process. Your paper does not say one word about that."

"The Cuban delegation reiterates its protest at the grave violations of procedure that have been produced in the anti-democratic management of the process of this conference, via the utilization of arbitrary, exclusive and discriminatory forms of debate and negotiation..."

"Mr. President, I am formally asking for this statement to be placed in the final report on the workings of this lamentable and shameful 15th Conference of the Parties."

What nobody could have imagined is that, after another lengthy recess and when everybody thought that only the formalities remained before the conclusion of the Summit, the prime minister of the host country, at the instigation of the *yankis*, would make another attempt to pass off the document as a consensus of the Summit, when not even foreign ministers were left in

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the plenary. The delegates from Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Cuba, who remained vigilant and unsleeping until the last minute, frustrated the latter maneuver in Copenhagen.

However, the problem was not concluded. The powerful are not accustomed to brooking resistance. On December 30, the Danish Permanent Mission to the United Nations, in New York, courteously informed our mission in that city that it had taken note of the Copenhagen Agreement of December 18, 2009, and attached an advance copy of that decision. It affirmed textually: "...the government of Denmark, in its capacity of president of COP15, invites the Parties to the Convention to inform the secretariat of the UNFCCC in writing, and as soon as possible, of your willingness to commit to the Copenhagen Agreement."

"This surprise communication motivated a response from the Cuban Permanent Mission to the United Nations, in which it "... flatly rejects the intention to gain indirect approval of a text that was the object of repudiation by various delegations, not only on account of its insufficiency in the face of the grave effects of climate change, but also for exclusively responding to the interests of a reduced group of states."

At the same time it prompted a letter from Dr. Fernando González Bermúdez, first deputy minister of the Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment of the Republic of Cuba to Mr. Yvo de Boer, executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, some of whose paragraphs are transcribed below: "We have received with surprise and concern the note that the government of Denmark is circulating to the Permanent Missions of the member states of the United Nations in New York. Of which you are surely aware, via which the party states of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to inform the executive secretary, in writing, of you wish to be associated with the so-called Copenhagen Agreement."

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"We have observed, with additional concern, that the government of Denmark communicates that the executive secretary of the Convention is to include in the report of the Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen, a list of the party states which have stated their will to commit to the quoted agreement."

"In the judgment of the Republic of Cuba, this form of acting constitutes a crude and reprehensible violation of what was decided in Copenhagen, where the party states, faced with an evident lack of consensus, confined themselves to taking note of the existence of the said document."

"Nothing that was agreed in COP15 authorizes the government of Denmark to adopt this action and, far less, the executive secretary to include a list of party states in the final report, for which he has no mandate."

"I must inform you that the government of the Republic of Cuba most firmly rejects this new attempt to indirectly legitimate a spurious document and to reiterate to you that this way of acting compromises the result of future negotiations, sets a dangerous precedent for the Convention's work and, in particular, is injurious to the spirit of goodwill in which delegations must continue the negotiation process next year," concluded Cuba's first deputy minister of science, technology and the environment."

Many know, especially the social movements and better informed people in humanitarian, cultural and scientific movements, that the document promoted by the United States constitutes a regression of the positions achieved by those who are making efforts to avert a colossal disaster for our species. There is no point in repeating here facts and figures that are mathematically demonstrated. The data is confirmed on Internet web pages and are within the reach of a growing number of people who are interested in the issue.

The theory defending adherence to the document is feeble and implies a setback. The deceptive idea that the rich countries will contribute the miserable sum of \$30 billion over three years to the poor countries in order to offset the costs implied by confronting climate change, a figure which could rise to 100 billion by 2020, which in the context of this exceedingly grave problem, is like waiting for the Greek calendars. Specialists know that those figures are ridiculous and unacceptable given the volume of investments required. The origin of such sums is vague and confused, in a way that they do not commit anybody.

What is the value of one dollar? What is the significance of \$30 billion? We all know that, from Bretton Woods in 1944 to Nixon's presidential order in 1971 – imparted in order to offload the cost of the genocidal war on Vietnam onto the world economy – that the value of one dollar, measured in gold, has gradually been reduced to the point of today, when it is approximately 32 times less than then; \$30 billion thus signifies less than one billion, and one billion divided by 32 is equivalent to \$3.125 million, which would not even stretch to building one middle-capacity oil refinery at the present time.

If, at some point, the industrialized countries were to meet their promise to contribute 0.7% of their GDP to the developing countries – something that, barring a few exceptions, they never have – the figure would be in excess of \$250 billion every year.

The U.S. government spent \$800 billion on saving the banks. How much would it be prepared to pay to save the nine billion people who will inhabit the planet in 2050, if large-scale drought and sea flooding provoked by the melting of glaciers and great masses of frozen water from Greenland and Antarctica?

Let us not deceive ourselves. What the United States has attempted with its maneuvers in Copenhagen is to divide the Third World, to

separate more than 150 underdeveloped countries from China, India, Brazil, South Africa and others with which we must fight united to defend – in Bonn, Mexico or any other international conference, along with the social, scientific and humanitarian organizations – genuine agreements that will benefit all countries and preserve humanity from a disaster that could lead to the extinction of our species.

The world is in possession of constantly more information, but politicians have constantly less time for thinking.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fidel Castro Ruz', enclosed within a large, sweeping, handwritten flourish that underlines the signature.

Fidel Castro Ruz

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The rich nations and their leaders, including the U.S. Congress, would seem to be arguing which will be the last to disappear.

When Obama has completed the 28 parties with which he proposed to celebrate this Christmas, if Epiphany is included among them, perhaps Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar will advise him on what he should do.

Please excuse this extended Reflection. I did not wish to divide it into two parts. I apologize to my patient readers.



Commanders Che Guevara and Fidel Castro to the victory of the Cuban Revolution



The 1st. may 2009 demonstration at Havana, Cuba

Frente de Trabajadores de la Energía, de México
Energy Workers' Front, of Mexico