

This week in Cuba (November 3-9, 2019)



The annual vote on the Cuban resolution at the UN General Assembly on “the need to end the economic, commercial, and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba” is a time of celebration in Cuba, for it is a time in which the governments of the world nearly unanimously support the Cuban demand for the United States to cease its long-standing blockade. The first vote on the resolution was held in 1992, and it was approved with 59 votes in favor, 3 opposed, and 71 abstentions. For the next seventeen years, the annual vote saw a steady increase of votes in favor and a corresponding decrease in abstentions, arriving in 2000 to 167 votes in favor, 3 opposed, and 4 abstentions. Since 2005, there have been only five countries or less that have opposed or abstained. In the vote this past week, there were 187 votes in favor of the Cuban resolution, three opposed (the United States, Israel, and Brazil), and two abstentions (Colombia and Ukraine).

In a brief discourse of seven minutes, the US ambassador to the United Nations, Kelly Craft, displayed a remarkable contempt for the opinion of the international community. She did not feel it necessary to defend her government with respect to the crimes with which it is accused by humanity. In response to the accusation that her government is using economic measures against the population in order to promote political change in Cuba, in violation of the UN Charter and international law, she merely asserted that all nations have the sovereign right to choose with which nations they trade. She ignores the fact that the United States attempts to stop all Cuban commercial and financial transactions, including

those with third countries, for the purpose of suffocating the Cuban economy and provoking political instability.

Her government is accused of violating the human rights of the Cuban people through the blockade.

Rather than responding to the accusation, she twists the debate, maintaining that her government is not responsible for human rights violations in Cuba. The U.S. embargo, she maintains, does not force what she calls “the Cuban regime” to violate the human rights of its own people. She names human rights abuses endured by the people, without feeling it necessary to provide documentation. She asserts that journalists and human rights advocates are arbitrarily arrested; doctors are forced to work without rest and with low wages in foreign missions; and business properties are seized and business licenses are suspended. She maintains that “the regime” is unwilling to import agricultural and medical goods authorized by the United States, without mentioning the imposed crediting and financial arrangements that create obstacles for the practical implementation of the authorized purchases. In this characterization of Cuban reality, she does what typically is done in the counterrevolutionary construction of socially disseminated distortions of reality: the formulation of lies and inventions, combined with omission of relevant, significant facts. The result is an image of a supposed reality that simply does not exist.

She claims that the Cuban people have no voice, apparently unaware of the Cuban political structures of popular power and mass organizations that not only give voice to the concerns and aspirations of the people, but also ensure that political authority is in the hands of deputies of the people, quite unlike her own country, in which the political process is controlled by professional politicians skilled at pretending to respond to the needs of the people but actually responding to elite corporate interests. She laments that all political parties are outlawed in Cuba, except for the Communist Party, and there is no indication that she understands that the Communist Party is a vanguard party and not an electoral political party. She demonstrates no understanding of how the vanguard party and the delegates and deputies of the people arrive to be aware of the opinions, concerns, and hopes of the people. She laments that the Cuban media “is entirely controlled by the state,” without knowing that some newspapers and magazines are managed by non-governmental mass organizations and organizations of civil society; and apparently without appreciation of the virtues of public media as against media owned by international corporations.

She blames material shortcomings in Cuba on “destructive economic decisions” of the Cuban government, without recognizing the destructive consequences of the U.S. blockade on the economic and social development of the country, and without consciousness of the historic role of colonialism and neocolonialism in creating the underdevelopment that the triumphant revolution inherited in 1959. She asserts that all must be committed to speak the truth, without recognizing that the political discourse of the United States is founded in false premises that obscure the role of conquest, colonialism, slavery, and imperialism in promoting the spectacular ascent of the United States from 1776 to 1968.

It is difficult to imagine a voice so lame for an empire so powerful. One would have thought that great universities like Harvard and Georgetown would be able to produce more formidable imperialist spokespersons, even if not necessarily formed with a commitment to social justice and to the principle of the sovereignty of nations.

In his address to the General Assembly a short time later, Cuban Minister of Foreign Relations Bruno Rodríguez responded to the theme of the U.S. ambassador that the U.S. embargo is not responsible for human rights violations in Cuba. He referred to a number of specific cases of persons with needs for medicines and medical services that are not available to them because of the restrictions of the blockade, repeating, “Her government indeed is responsible.”

The Cuban Minister also criticized the U.S. political manipulation of the theme of human rights, which results in double standards. In this regard, he cited a number of articles in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, concerning which well-known facts and statistics with respect to the United States show clear violations.

Bruno Rodríguez declared that “the government of the United States uses lies and slander as pretexts for intensifying its aggression against Cuba. I reiterate that neither threats nor blackmail will extract the least political concession.” He cited Raúl Castro, who observed on April 10 that “in spite of its immense power, imperialism does not possess the capacity to break the dignity of a united people, proud of its history and of its freedom, attained through the force of much sacrifice.”

The Cuban Minister concluded, “In the name of the heroic, self-denying, and solidary people of Cuba, I once again ask you to vote in favor of the resolution, ‘the need to put an end to the economic, commercial, and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America on Cuba.’”

The November 8 headline of the newspaper Granma expressed the spirit of the day in Cuba: “Truth and justice triumph.”

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