

A People under Fire



VENEZUELA, whose people inherited from Bolívar ideas that transcended their time, now face an international dictatorship a thousand times more powerful than the Spanish colonial power and the newly-formed republic of the United States, which, via Monroe, proclaimed its right to the continent's natural resources and the sweat of its people.

Martí denounced the brutal system and described it as a monster, in whose entrails he had lived. His internationalist spirit shone like never before when, in a letter left unfinished due to his death in combat, he publicly revealed the objective of his unceasing struggle: "...I am in daily danger of giving my life for my country and duty. It is my duty – inasmuch as I realize it and have the spirit to fulfill it – to prevent, by the independence of Cuba, the United States from spreading over the West Indies and falling, with that added weight, upon other land of Our America..."

For good reason, in one of his simple verses, he said: "With the poor of this earth, my fate I wish to cast." Later, he proclaimed categorically: "Homeland is humanity." The apostle of our independence wrote one day: "Let Venezuela call on me to serve her: I am her son."

The most sophisticated media developed by technology, employed to kill human beings and to subjugate or exterminate the peoples; the mass implantation of conditioned reflexes of the mind; consumerism; and all available resources are being used today against the Venezuelan people in an attempt to shred apart the ideas of Bolívar and Martí.

The empire has created conditions conducive to violence and internal conflicts. I spoke with Chávez very seriously during his most recent visit on November 21 about the risk of assassination for anyone who is constantly exposed in open vehicles. I did so based on my experience as a combatant trained in the use of a telescopic sight and an

automatic weapon, and likewise, after the triumph, as someone who was the target of assassination plots directly ordered or induced by almost every U.S. administration since 1959.

The irresponsible government of the empire does not stop for a minute to think about how the assassination of the president or a civil war in Venezuela, with its enormous hydrocarbon reserves, would lead to an explosion of the globalized world economy. These circumstances have no precedent in human history.

Cuba, during our most difficult period following the demise of the USSR and the intensification of the U.S. economic blockade, developed close ties with the Bolivarian government of Venezuela. The exchange of goods and services grew from nearly zero to more than 7 billion dollars annually, with great economic and social benefits for both nations. It is currently our main provider of fuel for the country's consumption, something very difficult to acquire from other sources, due to the scarcity of light crude, insufficient refining capacity, the power of the United States and the wars it has launched to appropriate for itself the oil and gas reserves of the world.

In addition to the high energy prices, there are those of food, which imperial policy has determined should be turned into fuel for the voracious automobiles of the United States and other industrialized countries.

A victory for the "Yes" vote on December 2 would not be enough. The weeks and months following that date may prove to be extremely tough for many countries, including Cuba; that is, if the empire's adventures do not first lead the planet into an atomic war, as their own leaders have confessed.

Our compatriots can be sure that I have had time to think and to meditate at length on these problems.

Fidel Castro Ruz

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