

The Modern Day Rift between Cuba and Latin America

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When Cuban revolutionaries led by Fidel Castro successfully overthrew Batista and thus put an end to his dictatorship and his corrupt regime, a feeling of happiness, sympathy and hope took over the people of Latin America, specifically its youth. Our young nations perceived the goings-on in Cuba as a sign of progress toward ways of coexistence that brought liberty into political issues, independence and prosperity into economical issues and greater justice into social issues.

Almost fifty years have passed since those heroic deeds took place, and the reasons we once had to feel happiness and hope have disappeared. During the cold war, which divided the world into two opposing blocks and which brought us to the brink of another war, Cuba identified with the side led by the USSR, which had, by means of proclaiming the dictatorship of the proletariat, enslaved a great number of nations under totalitarian regimes that suppressed personal liberties. This attitude, tenaciously adopted by the government led by Fidel Castro, transformed Cuba into the most advanced communist system in Latin America with the most rapidly rising number of followers. At the same time, this caused Cuban isolation within the community of American nations, which resulted in its expulsion from the Organisation of American States in 1962.

Once the cold war ended in the fall of the Berlin Wall, and once the Soviet Union and other communist regimes collapsed, Cuba gradually reentered a relationship of peaceful coexistence and co-operation with the Latin-American nations; that is to say, it re-established commercial and diplomatic relations with these countries. However, even today a certain issue impedes the development of true friendship between Cuba and the majority of Latin American nations: the systematic violation of the basic human rights of those who oppose the ideology of the governing regime in Cuba.

Not only are all the official means of communication unattainable to these people, so too is their freedom to express and impart their opinions through any media. Whoever tries to exercise this freedom risks being arrested, tried and sentenced to grave and cruel sentences. The number of people presently incarcerated in Cuba for expressing their opinions serves as painful evidence. Nothing can justify this, not even the sanctions held against Cuba by the most powerful nation in the world today. These sanctions do not in any way facilitate Cuba's task to advance toward democracy. On the contrary, they make progress more difficult. No one can deny that it is more difficult for a nation or individuals who respect themselves to succumb to pressure from someone more powerful than to change direction based on their own decisions.

These days, the fight for democracy is most solidly founded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was signed by the Republic of Cuba as well as practically all other countries of the world. This document solemnly proclaims the fundamental bases of coexistence between nations, their people and the individuals that comprise those nations. This commitment together with the amendments accorded by the UN in order to enrich the declaration with regard to specific areas, ought to, both now and into the future, establish the relations not only between nations but also between the men and women who form them. The same reasons that led the

majority of Chileans to fight for the recuperation of our democracy also justify the legitimate yearning and longing of every Cuban, and of the Cuban people as a whole, for the rule of freedom that is respected by all in their sister nations.

In my opinion, the ethical imperative should prevail over the sympathetic or opposing attitudes, both ideological and personal, of every individual. Peace in Cuba, as in any other part of world, will never be attained through the rule of violence nor through the abuse of power, be it military, political or economical. Rather, it will be attained on the basis of truth, justice and the respect of human rights and solidarity. I am sure that the highest ideals of justice and equality that motivate those who fight for a better humanity can become a reality in Cuba, yet only if they are sought freely, as I believe that that is the only way compatible with the dignity of every human being.