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It would be dishonest of me to remain silent after hearing the speech Obama delivered on the afternoon of May 23 at the Cuban American National Foundation created by Ronald Reagan. I listened to his speech, as I did McCain's and Bush's. I feel no resentment towards him, for he is not responsible for the crimes perpetrated against Cuba and humanity. Were I to defend him, I would do his adversaries an enormous favor. I have therefore no reservations about criticizing him and about expressing my points of view on his words frankly.

What were Obama's statements?

"Throughout my entire life, there has been injustice and repression in Cuba. Never, in my lifetime, have the people of Cuba known freedom. Never, in the lives of two generations of Cubans, have the people of Cuba known democracy. (...) This is the terrible and tragic status quo that we have known for half a century - of elections that are anything but free or fair (...) I won't stand for this injustice, you won't stand for this injustice, and together we will stand up for freedom in Cuba," he told annexationists, adding: "It's time to let Cuban American money make their families less dependent upon the Castro regime. (...) I will maintain the embargo."

The content of these declarations by this strong candidate to the U.S. presidency spares me the work of having to explain the reason for this reflection.

José Hernandez, one of the Cuban American National Foundation directives who Obama praises in his speech, was none other than the owner of the 50-calibre automatic rifle, equipped with telescopic and infrared sights, which was confiscated, by chance, along with other deadly weapons while being transported by sea to Venezuela, where the Foundation had planned to assassinate the writer of these lines at an international meeting held in Margarita, in the Venezuelan state of Nueva Esparta.

Pepe Hernández' group wanted to renegotiate a former pact with Clinton, betrayed by Mas Canosa's clan, who secured Bush's electoral victory in 2000 through fraud, because the latter had promised to assassinate Castro, something they all happily embraced. These are the kinds of political tricks inherent to the United States' decadent and contradictory system.

Presidential candidate Obama's speech may be formulated as follows: hunger for the nation, remittances as charitable hand-outs and visits to Cuba as propaganda for consumerism and the unsustainable way of life behind it.

How does he plan to address the extremely serious problem of the food crisis? The world's grains must be distributed among human beings, pets and fish, which become smaller every year and more scarce in the seas that have been over-exploited by the large trawlers which no international organization could get in the way of. Producing meat from gas and oil is no easy feat. Even Obama overestimates technology's potential in the fight against climate change, though he is more conscious of the risks and the limited margin of time than Bush. He could seek the advice of Gore, who is also a democrat and is no longer a candidate, as he is aware of the accelerated pace at which global warming is advancing. His close political rival Bill Clinton, who is not running for the presidency, an expert on extra-territorial laws like the Helms-Burton and Torricelli Acts, can advise him on an issue like the blockade, which he promised to lift and never did.

What did he say in his speech in Miami, this man who is doubtless, from the social and human points of view, the most progressive candidate to the U.S. presidency? "For two hundred years," he said, "the

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United States has made it clear that we won't stand for foreign intervention in our hemisphere. But every day, all across the Americas, there is a different kind of struggle --not against foreign armies, but against the deadly threat of hunger and thirst, disease and despair. That is not a future that we have to accept --not for the child in Port au Prince or the family in the highlands of Peru. We can do better. We must do better. (...) We cannot ignore suffering to our south, nor stand for the globalization of the empty stomach." A magnificent description of imperialist globalization: the globalization of empty stomachs! We ought to thank him for it. But, 200 years ago, Bolivar fought for Latin American unity and, more than 100 years ago, Martí gave his life in the struggle against the annexation of Cuba by the United States. What is the difference between what Monroe proclaimed and what Obama proclaims and resuscitates in his speech two centuries later?

"I will reinstate a Special Envoy for the Americas in my White House who will work with my full support. But we'll also expand the Foreign Service, and open more consulates in the neglected regions of the Americas. We'll expand the Peace Corps, and ask more young Americans to go abroad to deepen the trust and the ties among our people," he said near the end, adding: "Together, we can choose the future over the past." A beautiful phrase, for it attests to the idea, or at least the fear, that history makes figures what they are and not all the way around.

Today, the United States have nothing of the spirit behind the Philadelphia declaration of principles formulated by the 13 colonies that rebelled against English colonialism. Today, they are a gigantic empire undreamed of by the country's founders at the time. Nothing, however, was to change for the natives and the slaves. The former were exterminated as the nation expanded; the latter continued to be auctioned at the marketplace —men, women and children—for nearly a century, despite the fact that "all men are born free and equal", as the Declaration of Independence affirms. The world's objective conditions favored the development of that system.

In his speech, Obama portrays the Cuban revolution as anti-democratic and lacking in respect for freedom and human rights. It is the exact same argument which, almost without exception, U.S. administrations have used again and again to justify their crimes against our country. The blockade, in and of itself, is an act of genocide. I don't want to see U.S. children inculcated with those shameful values.

An armed revolution in our country might not have been needed without the military interventions, Platt Amendment and economic colonialism visited upon Cuba.

The revolution was the result of imperial domination. We cannot be accused of having imposed it upon the country. The true changes could have and ought to have been brought about in the United States. Its own workers, more than a century ago, voiced the demand for an eight-hour work shift, which stemmed from the development of productive forces.

The first thing the leaders of the Cuban revolution learned from Martí was to believe in and act on behalf of an organization founded for the purposes of bringing about a revolution. We were always bound by previous forms of power and, following the institutionalization of this organization, we were elected by more than 90 percent of voters, as has become customary in Cuba, a process which does not in the least resemble the ridiculous levels of electoral participation which, many a time, as in the case of the United States, stay short of 50 percent of the voters. No small and blockaded country like ours would have been able to hold its ground for so long on the basis of ambition, vanity, deceit or the abuse of power, the kind of power its neighbor has. To state otherwise is an insult to the intelligence of our heroic people.

I am not questioning Obama's great intelligence, his debate skills or his work ethic. He is a talented orator and is ahead of his rivals in the electoral race. I feel sympathy for his wife and little girls, who accompany him and give him encouragement every Tuesday. It is indeed a touching human spectacle. Nevertheless, I am obliged to raise a number of delicate questions. I do not expect answers; I wish only to raise them for the record.

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1. Is it right for the president of the United States to order the assassination of any one person in the world, whatever the pretext may be?
2. Is it ethical for the president of the United States to order the torture of other human beings?
3. Should state terrorism be used by a country as powerful as the United States as an instrument to bring about peace on the planet?
4. Is an Adjustment Act, applied as punishment on only one country, Cuba, in order to destabilize it, good and honorable, even when it costs innocent children and mothers their lives? If it is good, why is this right not automatically granted to Haitians, Dominicans, and other peoples of the Caribbean, and why isn't the same Act applied to Mexicans and people from Central and South America, who die like flies against the Mexican border wall or in the waters of the Atlantic and the Pacific?
5. Can the United States do without immigrants, who grow vegetables, fruits, almonds and other delicacies for U.S. citizens? Who would sweep their streets, work as servants in their homes or do the worst and lowest-paid jobs?
6. Are crackdowns on illegal residents fair, even as they affect children born in the United States?
7. Are the brain-drain and the continuous theft of the best scientific and intellectual minds in poor countries moral and justifiable?
8. You state, as I pointed out at the beginning of this reflection, that your country had long ago warned European powers that it would not tolerate any intervention in the hemisphere, reiterating that this right be respected while demanding the right to intervene anywhere in the world with the aid of hundreds of military bases and naval, aerial and spatial forces distributed across the planet. I ask: is that the way in which the United States expresses its respect for freedom, democracy and human rights?
9. Is it fair to stage pre-emptive attacks on sixty or more dark corners of the world, as Bush calls them, whatever the pretext may be?
10. Is it honorable and sound to invest millions and millions of dollars in the military industrial complex, to produce weapons that can destroy life on earth several times over?

Before judging our country, you should know that Cuba, with its education, health, sports, culture and sciences programs, implemented not only in its own territory but also in other poor countries around the world, and the blood that has been shed in acts of solidarity towards other peoples, in spite of the economic and financial blockade and the aggression of your powerful country, is proof that much can be done with very little. Not even our closest ally, the Soviet Union, was able to achieve what we have.

The only form of cooperation the United States can offer other nations consist in the sending of military professionals to those countries. It cannot offer anything else, for it lacks a sufficient number of people willing to sacrifice themselves for others and offer substantial aid to a country in need (though Cuba has known and relied on the cooperation of excellent U.S. doctors). They are not to blame for this, for society does not inculcate such values in them on a massive scale.

We have never subordinated cooperation with other countries to ideological requirements. We offered the United States our help when hurricane Katrina lashed the city of New Orleans. Our internationalist medical brigade bears the glorious name of Henry Reeve, a young man, born in the United States, who fought and died for Cuba's sovereignty in our first war of independence.

Our revolution can mobilize tens of thousands of doctors and health technicians. It can mobilize an equally vast number of teachers and citizens, who are willing to travel to any corner of the world to fulfill any noble purpose, not to usurp people's rights or take possession of raw materials.

The good will and determination of people constitute limitless resources that cannot be kept and would not fit in a bank's vault. They cannot spring from the hypocritical politics of an empire.

Fidel Castro Ruz

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