

THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

The news from the Danish capital gives a picture of chaos. After planning a conference with about 40 thousand people in attendance, the hosts find it impossible to honor their promise. Evo, the first of the two presidents of ALBA-member countries to arrive, stated some truths derived from the millennium-old culture of his people.

According to press agencies he said that he had received a mandate from the Bolivian people to oppose any agreement that does not meet the expectations. He explained that climate change is not the cause but the effect, and that we all have an obligation to defend the rights of Mother Earth vis-à-vis a capitalist development model; to defend the culture of life vis-à-vis the culture of death. He also addressed the climate debt that the rich countries should pay to the poor countries and the return of the atmospheric space taken from the latter.

He considered ridiculous the annual figure of 10 billion USD offered until the year 2012 while the yearly needs amount to hundreds of billions. At the same time, he accused the United States of spending trillions to export terrorism to Iraq and Afghanistan and to set up military bases in Latin America.

The President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela addressed the Summit on the 16th, at 8:40 a.m. Cuban time. He made a brilliant speech that was much applauded. His phrases were remarkable.

He challenged a document proposed to the Summit by the Danish minister chairing the conference. He said:

"...this text has come out of the blue; we shall not accept any text that has not been produced by the working groups, I mean, the legitimate texts that have been the subject of negotiations for the past two years."

"There is a group of nations that feel above us in the South, in the Third World..."

"...it's not a surprise, there is no democracy, we are facing a dictatorship."

"...I was reading some slogans painted in the streets by the youths... one read: 'don't change the climate, change the system,' and another: 'if the climate had been a bank it would have been bailed out.'"

"Obama [...] received the Nobel Peace Prize the same day he sent 30 thousand troops to kill innocent people in Afghanistan."

"I support the view of the representatives of Brazil, Bolivia and China, I only wanted to express my support [...] but I was not given the floor..."

"The rich are destroying the planet, could it be they are planning to move to another when this one is destroyed?"

"...there is no doubt that climate change is the most devastating environmental issue of this century."

"...the United States' population is barely 300 million; China's is almost five times that. The United States' oil consumption exceeds 20 million barrels a day; China's is hardly 5 or 6 million barrels a day. Thus, the same cannot be asked from the United States and from China."

"...the reduction of unfriendly gas emissions and the acceptance of a long-term agreement on cooperation [...] seem to have failed, for now. Why? [...] the irresponsible attitude and the lack of political will of the most powerful nations on Earth."

"...the gap between the rich and the poor countries has continued to widen despite all of the summits and the unfulfilled promises, and the world continues its destructive march."

"...the total income of the wealthiest 500 persons in the world is higher than the income of the 416 million poorest persons."

"Infant mortality amounts to 47 per 1000 live births, but in the rich countries it is only 5/1000."

"...how much longer can we let millions of children die from curable diseases?"

"Actually, 2.6 billion have no access to health services."

"The Brazilian author Leonardo Boff has written: 'The strongest survive on the ashes of the weakest.'"

"Jean Jacob Rousseau said that 'Between the strong and the weak freedom oppresses.' That's why the empire talks of freedom; freedom to oppress, to invade, to kill, to annihilate and to exploit: that's their freedom. And then Rousseau added the saving phrase: 'Only the Law can make us free.'"

"How much longer are we going to tolerate armed conflicts that massacre millions of innocent people so that the powerful can grab the resources of others?"

"Nearly two centuries back a universal liberator, Simon Bolivar, said: 'If nature opposes, we shall fight it and force it to obey.'"

"This planet lived for billions of years without us, without human beings; it doesn't need us to exist, but we can't live without Earth..."

Evo addressed the conference in the morning of today, Thursday. His speech will also be treasured.

He very candidly opened his remarks by saying: "I wish to say how upset we are over the lack of organization and the delays in this international gathering..."

His basic ideas were the following:

"When we ask what is it with the hosts, [...] we are told it's the United Nations; when we ask what is it with the United Nations, they say it's Denmark, so we don't know who is the disorganizer of this international meeting..."

"...I'm amazed because only the effects and not the causes of climate change are being discussed."

"If we fail to identify where the destruction of the environment comes from [...] we will never be able to solve this problem..."

"...two cultures are antagonizing: the culture of life and the culture of death; the culture of death is capitalism, which the indigenous peoples identify with those who want to live better at the expense of others."

"...exploiting others, plundering their natural resources, assaulting Mother Earth, privatizing basic services..."

"...living well is living in solidarity, in equality, in complementation, in reciprocity..."

"When it comes to climate change, these two ways of life, these two cultures of life are antagonizing, and if we don't decide which is the best way of life, we will not be able to solve it, because we have problems with life: luxury and consumerism hurt society, and sometimes in this kind of international meeting we avoid telling the truth."

"...in our way of life being truthful is sacred, and that is not being observed here."

"...in our Constitution it reads *ama sua, ama llulla, ama quella*, which means don't steal, don't lie, don't be weak."

"...Mother Earth or Nature exist and will exist without the human being, but human beings can't live without planet Earth, therefore, we have the obligation to defend the right of Mother Earth."

"...I applaud the United Nations because finally this year it has established the International Day of Mother Earth."

"...our mother is sacred, our mother is our life; a mother cannot be rented, cannot be sold or assaulted, a mother must be respected."

"We have profound differences with the Western model, and that is under discussion at this moment."

"We are in Europe now, and you know that many Bolivian families, many Latin American families come to Europe, why do they come here? They come to improve their living conditions. In Bolivia, they could be earning 100 or 200 dollars a month, but that family or that person comes here to care for a European grandmother or grandfather, and he earns 1,000 Euros a month."

"Such are the asymmetries we have from one continent to another, and it is our obligation to discuss the ways to achieve a certain balance, [...] cutting down the deep asymmetries between families, between countries and, especially, between continents."

"When [...] our brothers and sisters come here to survive or improve their living conditions they are expelled, with those papers known as expatriation documents [...] but when a long time ago the European grandfathers arrived in Latin America, they were not expelled. My families, my brothers and sisters are not coming here to own mines, nor are they landowners with thousands of hectares of land. In the past, no passports or visas were needed to get to Abya Yala, that is, to the Americas."

"...if the rights of Mother Earth are not recognized, it will be useless to speak of 10 billions or 100 billions, which is an offense to humanity."

"...the wealthy nations should welcome all the immigrants affected by climate change instead of forcing them to return to their countries as they are doing now..."

"...our obligation is to save all of humanity and not half of humanity."

"...the FTAA, Free Trade Area of the Americas, [...] is not a Free Trade Area of the Americas, but a free colonization area of the Americas..."

Evo suggested the following questions, among others, for a worldwide referendum on climate change:

"..Do you agree to restore a harmonious relationship with Nature recognizing the rights of Mother Earth...?"

"...Do you agree to change this excessively consumerist and wasting model, that is, the capitalist

system...?"

"...Do you agree that the developed countries should reduce and reabsorb their greenhouse effect gas emissions...?"

"...Do you agree on transferring everything that is currently being spent in wars to create a budget higher than the defense budget to tackle the problem of climate change..?"

As it is widely known, the UN Agreement on Climate Change was signed in Kyoto in 1997. This instrument bound 38 industrial nations to cut down their greenhouse effect gas emissions to a certain percentage in comparison with those of 1990. The European Union countries committed to an 8% as of 2005, the year when most of the signatories had already ratified it. George W. Bush, then President of the United States, --the largest greenhouse effect gas producer country which is responsible for one-fourth of such emissions—had rejected the agreement since the midst of 2001.

The other UN members continued their efforts. The research centers proceeded with their work. It is evident by now that a major catastrophe is threatening our species. Perhaps the worst could be that the blind selfishness of a privileged wealthy minority tries to bring the burden of the necessary sacrifices to weigh heavily on the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of the planet.

That contradiction can be perceived in Copenhagen where thousands of people are standing firm by their views.

The Danish police are resorting to brutal methods to crush resistance; many protesters are being preventively arrested. I spoke over the phone with our Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez, who was at a solidarity rally in Copenhagen with Chavez, Evo, Lazo and other representatives of ALBA. I asked him who those people were that the Danish police suppressed with such hate, twisting their arms and beating their backs repeatedly. He said they were Danish citizens and people from other European nations as well as members of the social movements who were demanding from the Summit a real solution now to deal with climate change. He also told me that debates in the Summit would continue at midnight. It was already night in Copenhagen as I spoke with him. The time difference is six hours.

Our comrades have reported from the Danish capital that a worse situation is expected tomorrow, Thursday. At 10 in the morning, the UN Summit will be adjourned for two hours as the Danish Head of Government meets with 20 Heads of Government he has invited to talk "global problems" with Obama. That's what they have called the meeting whose objective it is to impose an agreement on climate change.

Even though all of the official delegations will take part, only "the invitees" will be allowed to offer their views. Of course, neither Chavez nor Evo are counted among those entitled to express their opinions. The idea is to give an opportunity to the Nobel Laureate to read a previously elaborated speech, after the decision has been made in that meeting to postpone the agreement until the end of next year in Mexico City. The social movements will not be allowed to attend. After that show, the "Summit" will resume its works in the plenary hall until its inglorious closing.

Since television has carried the images, the world has seen the fascist methods used against the people in Copenhagen. The protesters, most of them young people, have won the solidarity of the peoples.

Despite the maneuvers and deception of the leaders of the empire, their moment of truth is drawing closer. Their own allies are losing confidence in them. In Mexico, the same as in Copenhagen or elsewhere in the world, they will be met by the growing resistance of the peoples that have not renounced the hope to survive.

Fidel Castro Ruz
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