

WORLD PEACE HANGING BY A THREAD

Yesterday I had the satisfaction of having a pleasant conversation with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. I had not seen him since 2006, more than five years ago, when he visited our country to participate in the 14th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement of Countries in Havana. During the summit, Cuba was elected for the second time as president of the organization for a three-year term.

I had become gravely ill on July 26, 2006, a month and a half prior to the summit, and could barely sit up in bed. Many of the most distinguished leaders who participated in the event were kind enough to visit me. Chavez and Evo visited me several times. One afternoon four visitors came by whom I will always remember: UN Secretary General Kofi Annan; an old friend, Abdelaziz Buteflika, the president of Algeria; Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the president of Iran; and the vice minister of Foreign Affairs and current Foreign Minister of China, Yang Jiechi, on behalf of the leader of the Communist Party and the president of China, Hu Jintao. It was really an important time for me; I was in the midst of intense physiotherapy on my right hand that I had seriously injured when I fell in Santa Clara.

With all four I spoke about some of the difficulties facing the world at the time; problems that have become progressively more complex.

During our meeting yesterday, I noted that the Iranian president was absolutely calm and tranquil, completely unconcerned about the Yankee threats and, fully confident in the capacity of his people to confront any aggression and in the effectiveness of their arms—which, in large part, they produce themselves—to inflict an unpayable price on its aggressors.

In reality, we hardly spoke about the topic of war. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was focused on the ideas he had presented at the Main Hall of the University of Havana during his conference on the struggle of humankind: “Moving towards reaching and achieving peace, security, respect and human dignity as a fundamental desire of all human beings throughout history.”

I am convinced that Iran will not commit any rash actions that might contribute to setting off a war. If a war were to be unleashed, it would inevitably be completely as a result of the recklessness and congenital irresponsibility of the Yankee Empire.

I believe that the political situation surrounding Iran and the associated risks of a nuclear war that involves us all—regardless of whether one possess nuclear weapons—are extremely delicate because they threaten the very existence of our species. The Middle East has become the most troubled region on the planet, the same region that produces the energy resources vital for the world’s economy.

The destructive power and the mass sufferings caused by some of the weapons used in World War Two led to a strong movement to ban weapons such as asphyxiating gas and others. Nevertheless, conflicting interests and the huge profits made by arms manufacturers led to the production of crueler and more destructive weapons; modern technology has now added the means and material to build weapons that if used in a world war would lead to extinction.

I support the opinion, undoubtedly shared by all those with a basic sense of responsibility, that no country big or small has the right to possess nuclear weapons.

They never should have been used to attack two defenseless cities such as Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing and irradiating with horrible and long-lasting effects hundreds of thousands of men, women and children, in a country that had already been militarily defeated.

If fascism indeed forced the allied nations against Nazism to compete with this enemy of humanity in the production of such weapons, once the war ended and the United Nations was created, the first duty of this organization should have been to prohibit nuclear weapons without exception.

However, the United States, the strongest and richest power, forced the rest of the world to follow its lead. Today, they have hundreds of satellites that spy and monitor the entire world from outer space. Their naval, air and land forces are equipped with thousands of nuclear weapons; and they control the world's finances and investments at their whim via the International Monetary Fund.

Analyzing the history of each Latin American nation, from Mexico to Patagonia, by way of Santo Domingo and Haiti, one can observe that each and every country, without exception, have suffered for 200 years, from the beginning of the 19th century up until today. And, in one way or another, they are increasingly suffering the worst crimes that power and force can commit against the rights of a people. Brilliant Latin American writers are emerging in an increasing number. One of them, Eduardo Galeano, author of the book *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent* that describes the aforementioned, has just been invited to open the prestigious Casa de Las Americas Awards as a recognition to his outstanding body of work.

Events happen incredibly fast; but technologies report them to the public even faster. On any given day, like today, important news comes out at a dizzying pace. A cable report dated from January 11 states: "The Danish presidency of the European Union confirmed on Wednesday that a new series of more severe European sanctions against Iran, because of its nuclear program, will be discussed on January 23. The new sanctions will not only target the oil industry but also the Central Bank."

During a meeting with international journalists, Danish Foreign Minister Villy Soevndal said that "We will increase sanctions against the oil industry in addition to sanctions against financial structures." This clearly demonstrates that, in order to impede nuclear proliferation, Israel can go on accumulating hundreds of nuclear warheads while Iran is not allowed to produce 20% enriched uranium.

Another article, from a respected British news agency, states that "China gave no hint on Wednesday of giving ground to U.S. demands to curb Iran's oil revenues, rejecting Washington's sanctions on Tehran as overstepping ..."

The sheer tranquility with which the United States and civilized Europe carry out this campaign with incredible and systematic acts of terrorism is enough to shock anybody. Just look at these lines reported by another important European news agency: "The murder on Wednesday of Iranian nuclear specialist Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan [a scientist at the Natanz nuclear plant] was the fourth attack to kill a leading scientist in the country in almost exactly two years."

On January 12, 2010: "Massoud Ali Mohammadi, a particle physics professor at Tehran University is killed when a booby-trapped motorcycle explodes outside his home in the capital. "

On November 29, 2010: "Two attacks target leading Iranian nuclear scientists on the same day. Majid Shahriari, a key member of Iran's Atomic Energy Agency, is killed in Tehran by a limpet bomb attached to his car. His colleague Fereydoon Abbasi Davani is also targeted by a bomb attached to his car, but escapes." The car was parked in front of the Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran where both men worked as professors.

On July 23, 2011: "Gunmen shoot dead Dariush Rezaei-Nejad, a senior scientist who is reportedly associated with the defense ministry, and wound his wife as they waited for their child outside a Tehran kindergarten."

On January 11, 2012 —the same day that Ahmadinejad travelled from Nicaragua to Cuba to give a conference at the University of Havana—, scientist Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan, "a deputy director at the

Natanz nuclear enrichment facility, is killed in a car bomb blast outside the [Allameh Tabatabai] University in east Tehran." As in previous years "Iran once again accused the United States and Israel."

The killings represent a systematic and selective slaughter of brilliant Iranian scientists. I have read articles by known Israeli sympathizers who write about crimes carried out by Israeli intelligence services in cooperation with the United States and NATO as if they were the most normal occurrence.

At the same time, Moscow news agencies report that "Russia warned that in Syria a similar scenario is developing as to that in Libya, and added that this time the attack will be launched from neighboring Turkey.

"The secretary of the Russian Security Council, Nikolai Patrushev, said the West wants to 'punish Damascus not as much for repressing the opposition, but because it is unwilling to sever ties with Tehran.'"

"...NATO members and some Persian Gulf states, operating according to the Libya scenario, intend to move from indirect intervention in Syrian affairs to direct military intervention...This time the main strikes forces will not be provided by France, the U.K. or Italy, but possibly by neighboring Turkey."

"Washington and Ankara are now assumed to be negotiating a "no-fly" zone over Syria, where Syrian armed insurgents can be trained and concentrated, added Patrushev."

News is not only coming out of Iran and the Middle East, but also from other parts of Central Asia near the Middle East. These reports show the great complexity of the problems that can arise from this dangerous region.

The United States has been led by its contradictory and absurd imperial policy to get involved in serious problems in countries such as Pakistan, whose borders with Afghanistan were drawn up by the colonialists without taking into account culture or ethnicities.

In Afghanistan, which defended its independence against English colonialism for centuries, drug production has multiplied in the wake of the Yankee invasion. Meanwhile, European soldiers, supported by drone airplanes and armed with sophisticated US weapons, carry out deplorable massacres that increase the people's hatred and ward off any possibilities of peace. All this and other dirty actions are also reported by Western news agencies.

"WASHINGTON, January 12, 2012 - US Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta called the actions of four U.S. marines who urinated on corpses in Afghanistan "utterly deplorable" The video of the act was circulated in the Internet.

"'I have seen the footage, and I find the behavior depicted in it utterly deplorable...'

"'This conduct is entirely inappropriate for members of the United States military and does not reflect the standards of values our armed forces are sworn to uphold...'"

In reality, Panetta neither confirms nor denies the action, and anyone, including the Secretary of Defense himself, may harbor doubt.

But it is also extremely inhumane that men, women and children, or an Afghani combatant fighting against the foreign occupation, be murdered by bombs dropped by drone planes. Another very serious incident: dozens of Pakistani soldiers and officials who safeguarded the country's borders have been killed by these bombs.

Afghani President Karzai stated that the outrage committed against the bodies was "simply inhumane." He asked for the US government "to urgently investigate the video and apply the most severe

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punishment to anyone found guilty in this crime.”

Meanwhile Taliban spokespersons declared that “over the last ten years, hundreds of similar acts have been carried out that were not reported...”

One even feels sorry for those soldiers, thousands of kilometers away from their family, friends and country, sent to fight in countries that they might not have even heard of during their school days, where they are assigned the task of killing or dying to enrich transnational companies, arms manufacturers and unscrupulous politicians who each year squander funds needed to feed and educate the uncountable millions of hungry and illiterate people around the world.

Many of these soldiers, victims of the trauma suffered, end up taking their own lives.

Is it an exaggeration to say that world peace is hanging by a thread?

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