The Cuban Revolution and the New Latin American Leadership: A View from Its Utopias

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Abstract: From the early days of the revolutionary triumph of January 1959, Cuba has embraced the dream of Latin American freedom and solidarity. It has accordingly given priority to supporting Latin American and Caribbean revolutionary movements engaged in taking political power through armed struggle and the construction of socialism and groups involved in other forms of struggle for democracy, national liberation, and social justice. At the same time, it has pursued policies with regard to the reformist civilian governments of the region that have helped to reduce the influence of U.S. administrations and their hemispheric allies. It has repeatedly reaffirmed its desire for political and economic integration with the countries of the region as a step toward true independence in the face of neoliberal globalization. With the emergence in the region of new leftist leadership seeking postneoliberal economic alternatives and participatory democracy, its cooperative relations with other Latin American countries have strengthened and deepened.

Keywords: Cuba, Latin America, International relations, Leadership, Utopias

We have no alternative but to dream, continue to dream, and dream, furthermore, with the hope that that better world will become a reality, and it will become a reality if we continue to struggle. Humanity can never abandon its dreams, Humanity can never abandon its utopias. Struggling for a utopia is, in part, constructing it.

– Fidel Castro

The new leftist leadership that emerged in Latin America in the second half of the 1980s, as César Rodríguez Garavito and Patrick Barrett (2005) explain, differs in a number of organizational, programmatic, strategic, and tactical ways from the historical left—the national-popular, reformist, and social movements connected to the labor movement, the communist parties, and the guerrilla organizations inspired by the Cuban Revolution. One of its distinctive features is that its various social movements, political fronts, and political parties have abandoned their attempt to take political and state power through more or less violent means as a necessary condition for the construction of a new society based on the ideals of socialism and communism that Cuba's political leadership and popular classes defended.

Consequently, the prominent elements of the contemporary left are using nonviolent extrainstitutional mobilizations and the institutional avenues that bourgeois representative democracy provides to promote more or less revolutionary reforms, depending on the situation, of the prevailing exclusionary,

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discriminatory, polarizing, and dependent neoliberal social, political, legal, and economic order. These reforms not only seek to create postneoliberal economic alternatives but also aim to mitigate the social debt created by the draconian structural adjustment programs of the U.S.-dominated international financial institutions, to democratize the existing representative democracies, and to promote participatory democracy within the state and within civil and political society (Rodríguez and Barrett, 2005: 17–65).

Since the end of the twentieth century, representatives of leftist political parties and political fronts have occupied prominent positions in the progressive governments that have taken root in Latin America and the Caribbean (Elías, 2006). Therefore, this study of Cuba's relations with these governments will focus on interstate relations in the projects of political coordination, socioeconomic cooperation, and multinational integration emerging in the continent (Suárez, 2005a).

Before tackling these themes, however, it is important to consider the principal utopias that since January 1, 1959, have guided the theory and praxis (not without error) of the Cuban Revolution's projection toward the geographical, human, and cultural area that the young Ernesto Guevara de la Serna, following the apostle of Cuban independence, José Martí, called "Our Greater America" (Guevara, 2004 [1953]).¹

THE OUR-AMERICAN UTOPIAS OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

Originating from the unfinished struggles of the Latin American and Caribbean people for what José Martí called the "second independence" of "Our America" from the "American Rome" (Martí, 1974 [1889]; 1974 [1891]), as well as from his call for Cuban independence "in order to prevent the United States from extending its power across the Antilles and descending with even more might over our American lands" (Martí, 1974 [1895]: 473), the first of the Cuban Revolution's utopias was synthesized by Fidel Castro when he defended himself during the trial that followed the failed assault on the Moncada and Carlos Manuel de Céspedes barracks. On October 16, 1953, Castro, in the speech known as *History Will Absolve Me*, argued (1993 [1953]: 57), among other things, that if the July 26, 1953, popular insurrection that he led had triumphed, the new government would have fashioned a

Cuban policy for the Americas in close solidarity with the democratic peoples of the continent and those who are politically persecuted in the bloody tyrannies that oppress sister nations. In Martí's motherland they would find generosity, brotherhood, and bread and not the persecution, hunger, and betrayal found today. Cuba would be a bastion of liberty and not a shameful link in the chain of despotism.

This vision was perfected and enriched throughout the revolutionary struggle of the Cuban people against the pro-imperialist dictatorship of General Fulgencio Batista (1952–1958), including the successive accords between the top leadership of the 26th of July Movement and the Rebel Army and leftist organizations such as the communist Popular Socialist party, which had a long tradition of solidarity with its Latin American and Caribbean peers, and the Students' Revolutionary Directorate (subsequently called the 13th of March Revolutionary Movement), whose leader, José Antonio Echevarría,

said (quoted in García, 2002: 6-7):

The Cuban Revolution's historical destiny is to cooperate and promote by all means necessary the revolutionary movements of America that share the fundamental ideals of the American Revolution . . . as a historical moral obligation and as a strategic necessity in order to defend the achievements being realized in Cuba. The [Cuban] Revolution considers the political and economic integration of the Caribbean region as a crucial step toward Latin America's integration.

From the early days of the revolutionary triumph of January 1959, the dream of Latin American freedom and solidarity was quickly embraced by the Provisional Revolutionary Government. It proclaimed that the destiny of the revolutionary acts undertaken by Cuba was intimately intertwined with the multiple forms of struggle unfolding in Latin America and the Caribbean. In Caracas's Plaza del Silencio on January 23, 1959, Fidel Castro, the commander of the revolutionary army, said that these acts would put an end to "the miserable subjugation and humiliation in which we have lived for more than a century" (Castro, 1959a).

A few months later, as prime minister, he expressed the Provisional Revolutionary Government's desire to create a common market as the "first great step toward political unification" so that "in a not so distant future our sons and daughters can embrace in a strong and united Latin America" (Castro, 1959b). He linked that aspiration to overcoming the internal and external conditions (including those stemming from the asymmetrical relationship with the United States) that historically had led to economic underdevelopment and the existing immense social deficiencies. He also sought to extend, consolidate, and ethically reform the continent's bourgeois representative democracies, recognizing that "the people of the Americas do not want liberty without bread or bread without liberty" (Castro, 1959c).

All of these statements, supported by the top leadership of the three founding organizations of the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations (the 26th of July Movement, the Popular Socialist party, and the 13th of March Revolutionary Movement), found expression in the First Declaration of Havana, approved by the National General Assembly of the Cuban People on September 2, 1960, as a response to the first resolutions against the Cuban Revolution supported by the U.S. government and ratified by the Organization of American States (OAS). Critically reviewing the history of Latin America and the Caribbean, especially the numerous U.S. assaults on the nations of that region and the bourgeois representative democracies' governments succumbing to imperialist pressure, the declaration advocated for "the liberating Latin Americanism that beat in the heart of José Martí and Benito Juárez" in contrast to the "hypocritical Pan-Americanism" promoted since the late nineteenth century by the dominant classes, the powers that be, and successive U.S., Latin American, and Caribbean governments (AGNPC, 1971 [1960]).

Emphasizing that the history of Cuba was the history of America and was similar to that of the peoples of Africa and Asia, the declaration proclaimed that "the duty of revolutionaries was to make the revolution" (AGNPC, 1971 [1962]). It also criticized the dogmatism and sectarianism that reigned in the various political, social, and intellectual currents of the so-called old political, social, and intellectual left, including the so-called Marxist left and the demo-

cratic left (Castañeda, 1993). The latter was composed of the national-popular and reformist (either social democratic or social Christian) political parties in Latin America and the Caribbean that did not share the socialist program espoused by the communist, Trotskyite, and socialist parties (Hodges, 1976).

Using the inadequate language employed during those years to characterize the peripheral, dependent, and underdeveloped capitalism that prevailed in Latin America and the Caribbean, the declaration called for “indispensable unified action among the democratic and progressive forces of our peoples” (AGNPC, 1971 [1962]):

In the anti-imperialist and antifeudal struggle it is possible to assemble the vast majority of the people behind a goal of liberation that unites the efforts of the working class, the peasantry, intellectual workers, the petty bourgeoisie, and the most progressive sectors of the national bourgeoisie. These groups make up the immense majority of the population and contain the major social forces that are capable of sweeping away imperialist domination and feudal reaction. From the old Marxist militant to the sincere Catholic who has had nothing to do with the Yankee monopolies and feudal lords of the land, they should unite in that wide movement for the good of the nation, for the good of the people, for the good of Latin America. That movement can attract the progressive elements of the armed forces that have been humiliated by the Yankee military missions, the betrayal of national interests by the feudal oligarchies, and the sacrifice of national sovereignty to the dictates of Washington.

Despite the continuing radicalization of the Cuban Revolution (which intensified after the missile crisis of October 1962), these programmatic, strategic, and tactical pronouncements were reiterated in the July 26, 1964, Declaration of Santiago de Cuba. Hours after a meeting of OAS foreign ministers in which it was agreed that all nations that had not yet broken off diplomatic, commercial, consular, and cultural relations with Cuba should do so, Cuba proclaimed its right “to support, with all the resources at its disposal, the revolutionary movements operating in those countries that are engaging in similar interference in the internal affairs of our nation” (AGNPC, 1971 [1964]).

As a consequence of the international and hemispheric situation and the voluntarism and subjectivism that all revolutionaries and their followers share, during the second half of the 1960s the Cuban political authorities (including the top leadership of the then recently founded Cuban Communist party)² gave priority to supporting revolutionary movements aimed at taking political power and constructing socialism through armed struggle against feudal reactionaries (Hodges, 1976). Solidarity was also extended, however, to Latin American and Caribbean political and social actors involved in other forms of struggle for democracy, national liberation, and social justice, among them the West Indies decolonization movements negotiating with the United Kingdom³ and, after October 1968, the reformist and nationalist military governments that had come to power in Peru and Panama.

The praxis of the Cuban Revolution continued during the first five years of the 1970s despite utopian, axiological, programmatic, strategic, and tactical differences and the lack of understanding of Latin American and Caribbean

groups associated with the historical left (Debray, 1975a; 1975b). In particular, its political leadership and the popular organizations acting in the political sphere and in civil society consistently expressed solidarity with the nationalist military governments in Bolivia from 1970 to 1971 and in Ecuador between 1972 and 1976.⁴ Similarly, from 1970 to 1973, the Cuban political leadership supported the social, ideological-cultural (among them liberation theology), and political forces that participated in Chile's Popular Unity government under Salvador Allende. It also offered solidarity to political organizations and parties that confronted the civilian or military national security states and the "traditional" or fascistic dictatorships that prevailed at the time (Suárez, 2003; 2006).

At the same time, the Cuban revolutionary leadership deployed fruitful differentiated policies with regard to the reformist civilian governments in power in Argentina (1973–1974), Colombia (1974–1978), Mexico (1970–1976), and Venezuela (1974–1979), as well as those in Barbados, Jamaica, Guyana, and Trinidad-Tobago (Rodríguez, 1981; 1986). These policies clearly contributed to isolating the aggression of U.S. administrations and their hemispheric allies and helped to modify the OAS accords that since 1964 had obliged its member states (except for Mexico) to break all official ties with Cuba, facilitating the reestablishment of diplomatic relations with the four Caribbean governments mentioned above (December 8, 1972) as well as with the governments of Argentina, Colombia, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela. They contributed to Cuba's entrance into the Latin American Energy Organization and the Latin American Economic System, founded in 1973 and 1975, respectively, under the auspices of the reformist governments of Mexico and Venezuela.

THE DIALECTIC BETWEEN "THE REVOLUTION" AND "INTEGRATION"

All of the anti-imperialist, liberatory, unitary, integrationist, and Our-American utopias of the Cuban Revolution were included in the Programmatic Platform of the Cuban Communist party (DOR, 1976a), approved by its first congress (December 17–22, 1975) and institutionalized in the policies affirmed in the first socialist constitution of the Republic of Cuba, which was approved after intense public debate by 97.6 percent of its citizens in the February 15, 1976, plebiscite (Cantón and Duarte, 2006: 42). This Magna Carta expressed the aspiration of the Cuban people "to integrate themselves with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean as they are liberated from external domination and internal oppression and join in a great community of people united historically in a common struggle against colonialism, neocolonialism, and imperialism and dedicated to national and social progress" (DOR, 1976b).

The Cuban political and state leadership's unconditional support for the multiple forms of struggle for genuine national independence, democracy, and social justice that were developing in Latin America was the expression of that will. After March 1979, it also supported Grenada's "grand revolution" as well as the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua. Although each of

these revolutionary experiences was unique and differed from Cuba's experience with the transition to socialism, in the reading of the political leadership they confirmed that the Cuban Revolution was not "a historical exception" and that "unity, the masses, and armed struggle" were the "three decisive ingredients for achieving the triumph of revolution" (Suárez, 1999: 216). Defending that always problematic triad did not, however, prevent the Cuban Communist party, the Cuban mass organizations, or the Cuban government from organizing or supporting Latin American and Caribbean social, political, and cultural forces (including the so-called democratic left) and existing or emerging bourgeois representative democratic governments that defended national sovereignty and sought negotiated political solution to the Central American conflict and the foreign debt crisis. In spite of the notable differences between the utopian socialists of the Cuban Revolution and the Permanent Conference of Latin American and Caribbean Political Parties, founded in Mexico in 1979, the Cuban Communist party became a member of that organization (PARALATINO/IRELA, 1997). Another important expression of this policy was the important exchanges between the Cuban state authorities and the Latin American governments that, in 1986, established the Rio Group: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

Previously the Cuban government had expressed its desire to contribute to a negotiated political solution to all of the civil conflicts (pursuing democracy and national and social liberation) in Colombia and Central America. Similarly, reiterating and detailing his previous position, Fidel Castro, as the president of the Council of State and the Council of Ministers of Cuba, insisted that the solution to the structural causes of the profound social and economic crisis of the underdeveloped world was the elimination of the foreign debt and the establishment of the New International Economic Order approved by the United Nations General Assembly in 1974. It was necessary for Latin America and the Caribbean to become integrated economically, he argued, because "without this integration we will continue to be dependent countries" of the major imperialist powers and, in particular, of the United States (Castro, 1985).

Despite (or, perhaps, because of) his previous criticism of "the governing classes of Latin America [that] did not know how to rise to the occasion" (Castro, 1988), the fall of the "false European socialism" (Rodríguez, 1992 [1991]), and the implosion of the Soviet Union in December 1991, as well as the difficult situation that those events and the simultaneous strengthening of the U.S. blockade created for the Cuban Revolution, the Cuban president repeated a call for that independent and integrationist utopia when he participated in the First Ibero-American Summit in Guadalajara, Mexico, in July 1991 (Castro, 1991a). He reiterated these ideas during his participation in the Fourth Congress of the Cuban Communist party held in Santiago de Cuba October 10-14, 1991. Recalling the ideas of José Martí and others who struggled for the true and final independence of Cuba (such as Antonio Maceo), that congress adopted various positions directed toward "saving the nation, the revolution, and the main achievements of socialism." Achieving this end was the greatest responsibility of the Cuban people with regard to the struggle of the "exploited, subjugated, plundered, [and] hungry peoples" of the world and, in particular, those of Latin America (Castro, 1991b).

One of the important decisions made was the reform of the Constitution of 1976, which was approved by the National Assembly of Popular Power at its July 10, 1992, session. The new edition of the constitution, besides reinforcing the socialist character of the state, restated the anti-imperialist, Third World, and internationalist principles that had guided Cuba's foreign policy in the previous decades. It also reaffirmed "its desire for integration and cooperation with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, whose common identity and historical necessity of advancing together toward political and economic integration in order to achieve real independence will allow us to reach the place that we deserve in the world" (Dirección de Legislación y Asesoría del Ministerio de Justicia, 2004: 2-3).

Consequently, and recognizing the major difficulties in "advancing the construction of socialism," the leader of the Cuban Revolution proposed that "the principal battle" that the major Latin American and Caribbean social and political forces – especially the left – had before them was creating the alliances needed to defeat neoliberal globalization. "If we do not defeat neoliberalism we will disappear as nations, disappear as independent states, and we will experience a colonization [by the imperialist powers] that has never been seen before in the Third World" (Castro, 1993).

Following this analysis, and with respect for the political forces that advocated or practiced it, he emphasized that armed struggle was not the "most promising road" under the present circumstances in the Western Hemisphere and in the world. One of the duties of the left was "to create consciousness of the necessity for the integration and unity of Latin America," either "with socialism or without socialism," since "even as capitalist nations we would have no future without unity and integration" (Castro, 1993). Objectively, this formulation rejected, at least temporarily, the unitary and integrationist vision of realizing everywhere in Latin America the revolutionary and socialist utopian program championed, despite its internal and external difficulties, by the political vanguard of the Cuban masses.

As president of the Council of State and the Council of Ministers and first secretary of the party's Central Committee, Castro repeated these ideas during the difficult moments of the last decade of the twentieth century and the first five years of the twenty-first. In numerous forums during those years, he promoted the defense of national sovereignty and the cultural identity of our peoples as a means to resist the "recolonization" of Latin America and the Caribbean by the dominant classes, the powers that be, and successive U.S. administrations. One important component of these battles was the rejection of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, whose negotiation and implementation before 2005 was agreed upon (without Cuba's participation) by the Summits of the Americas in Miami (in 1994), Santiago de Chile (in 1998), and Quebec (in 2001). Another was the denunciation of the biased and interventionist stipulations of the Inter-American Democratic Charter approved by the OAS on September 10, 2001, as well as the "infinite and preventive wars against terrorism" launched by the reactionary George W. Bush administration and supported by various Latin American governments after the September 11 attacks on the Twin Towers in New York City and on the Pentagon.⁵

THE OUR-AMERICAN PRAXIS OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

Those pronouncements and others by the leader of the Cuban Revolution condemning what he called “the pretension of the United States to control the world” (Castro, 2004) found resonance in various international institutions and organizations in which Latin American and Caribbean representatives of the new and old left worked on political, social, and economic issues. A major forum for these discussions was the 14 conferences hosted by the São Paulo Forum, which was founded in July 1990 and sponsored by the Workers’ party of Brazil, led by Luis Inácio Lula da Silva (Regalado, 2008a). Subsequently, it was revealed that Lula had worked with Fidel Castro and the top leadership of the Cuban Communist party to make this initiative a reality (Castro, 2008).

Notwithstanding the utopian, axiological, programmatic, strategic, and tactical differences among the political forces that participated in the forum (including some that were critical not only of what they called “Cuban statist socialism” but also of the country’s one-party political system [Regalado, 2008a; 2008b]), in that and other meetings (such as the Hemispheric Social Alliance and the World Social Forum) the Cuban Communist party representatives and the social and popular organizations active in Cuban political and civil society advocated the broadest possible alliance of antineoliberal and alternative social and political movements as a necessary condition for advancing the transformations that the world and the Western hemisphere (primarily the “semi-independent” states and the 15 colonial or semicolonial territories south of the Rio Grande and the Florida peninsula) required.⁶ This position was also reflected in the various events organized by the Network (of networks) in Defense of Humanity, founded in Mexico in 2003 and composed of prominent international intellectuals, including many from Latin America and the Caribbean.

For all of the reasons stated above, as well as others that have been excluded for brevity’s sake, we can conclude that in the theory and praxis of the Cuban Revolution’s foreign policy there has always been a desire to encourage, support, and organize the various efforts of these social, ideological-cultural, and political subjects, whether state or nonstate, to promote more or less radical changes in the political, diplomatic, military, economic, and ideological-cultural system of domination practiced by the dominant classes, dictatorships, and successive U.S. governments (in collusion with their hemispheric counterparts and other European imperialist powers) on the Latin American nations and peoples. This foreign-policy position has been taken without dogmatism or sectarianism.

Furthermore, the Cuban Revolution has maintained a consistent theoretical and practical critique of Pan-Americanism and, consequently, has assisted all of the multilateral organizations and forums supporting political agreement, cooperation, and economic integration that have been established in Latin America and the Caribbean in the past 48 years. In those cases in which it has been called to participate, the Cuban government has done so with constructive criticism, for example, in the Latin American Energy Orga-

nization, the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System, the Ibero-American Summit, the Association of Caribbean States, the CARIFORUM,⁷ the European-Latin American-Caribbean forums, and the various Conferences of First Ladies, Wives, and Representatives of Heads of State and Governments of the Americas, founded in 1991 (Kuper, 2003).⁸

In these and other settings the Cuban state and political authorities and the popular organizations that participate in socialist civil society have repeatedly condemned imperialist intervention in the internal affairs of Latin American nations. They have also supported all efforts to achieve changes favorable to the interests of the nation and the masses in Latin America and the Caribbean, without regard to the social position or political leanings of the civil or military leadership, the kinds of struggle that they have engaged in to achieve them, and the degree of their identification with socialist ideals.

This stand has found continuity in the sympathetic and supportive position that the Cuban Revolution has taken toward the leftist governments that have come to power since 1998 in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Uruguay, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and, more recently, Paraguay. The specific forms of that solidarity have been conditioned by the will of the social and political subjects involved, by the official Cuban perception of their consistency, and by the international or hemispheric correlation of forces at the particular moment.

Given these elements and the importance of Cuban interactions with all of the above-mentioned governments (and with others not mentioned, such as the progressive governments of Dominica, Guyana, St. Vincent, and the Grenadines), in the past few years the bonds of friendship between the Cuban state and political leadership and the Bolivarian Revolution, led by President Hugo Chávez Frías, and the cultural and democratic revolution taking place in Bolivia under the leadership of President Evo Morales have certainly been strengthened significantly. The progressive institutionalization, expansion, and intensification of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas, which has been promoted by Chávez since 2001 and whose fundamentals were established in the historic meeting between Chávez and Castro in December 2004, have been tremendously important (Aguirrechu, 2006: 153–157). These ideas were clarified and expanded with the Trade Treaty of the People signed in April 2006 by the two leaders and the then recently elected Bolivian President Evo Morales (Aguirrechu, 2006: 187–193) and in the forums held between 2006 and 2008. Furthermore, since his election in 2006, the Nicaraguan president and leader of the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, Daniel Ortega, has also met with the above-mentioned leaders.

In accordance with the agreements of the fifth summit, held in 2007 in Barquisimeto, Venezuela, the four presidents, at the sixth summit (Caracas, January 2008), agreed to 14 “grand national projects” in different areas (among them the establishment of a bank) and the institutionalization of the Council of Social Movements, in which—through its corresponding national

councils—the most representative popular organizations of their member states will participate. This will facilitate the fruitful exchanges that have been taking place among the popular organizations that participate in Cuba's civil society and the social movements that have been organized in Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. To this roster is added those on the island of Dominica and in Honduras, whose governments joined the Bolivarian Alternative in 2008.

As has already been said, all of these social and political organizations (including the Cuban) have also interacted with their counterparts in the other Latin American nations within the framework of the Hemispheric Social Alliance of the World Social Forum, as well as in other nongovernmental forums that operate in various nations of the Western Hemisphere (Dello Buono and Gandásegui, 2007). At the same time, Cuban social organizations have systematically participated in conferences of the Caribbean nations. Also, an important group of Cuban intellectuals and artists has participated in the events of the Network (of networks) in Defense of Humanity.

The Cuban Communist party, for its part, has maintained a consistent presence in the previously mentioned São Paulo Forum. Despite criticism by some member organizations of the forum (including some promoting twenty-first-century socialism) of the Cuban path to socialism, the forum's member organizations have maintained mutual respect and solidarity with Cuba and condemned the aggressive U.S. imperialist policies against the Cuban people (Regalado, 2008a).

Simultaneously, despite criticizing its foundation and functioning (Suárez, 2005b) and taking into consideration the positive (although contradictory) political changes that have taken place since 2003 in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay (as well as in Bolivia, Chile, and, more recently, in Paraguay), the Cuban political and state authorities continue to pursue formulas for strengthening their multifaceted cooperative relations with MERCOSUR. To achieve this, President Fidel Castro in 2005 signed an economic complementarity agreement with the presidents of all of the member nations of this integrationist project, which may soon become stronger with the full incorporation of Venezuela.

This act, along with the foundation of the Banco del Sur—composed of the governments of Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela—and the important agreements signed between the Cuban and Brazilian governments on the occasion of the second official visit to Cuba of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva (in January 2008), favors a deepening of the bilateral and multilateral relations between Cuban government authorities and the new Latin American leaderships, including governments (such as Argentina and Chile) that, for various internal and external reasons, have not been conspicuous for their interactions with Cuba. All of this is apparent in the favorable reception of the current president, Raúl Castro, at the summits of the Rio Group, MERCOSUR, and Latin America and the Caribbean in Bahia, Brazil, on December 16 and 17, 2008.

A FINAL COROLLARY

The possibility of deeper relations with the new Latin American leaderships will be directly associated with an appropriate solution to all of the objective and subjective problems that are affecting the Cuban transition to socialism (Castro, 2005; R. Castro, 2007), the deepening of the political and moral crisis created by the aggressive policy of the United States toward the Cuban people,⁹ and the new victories (few as they may be) of the multiple forms of state and nonstate resistance against the offensive launched since 1990 by the dominant classes, the powers that be, and successive U.S., Canadian, and some Latin American and Caribbean governments aimed at the institutionalization of a “new Pan-American order” (Suárez, 2007). Because of the threat that such an “order” poses to the preservation of Cuba as a bulwark of liberty in the Americas, to the multinational integration of Latin America, to the rest of the underdeveloped nations, and, therefore, to the future of humanity, the Cuban political leadership and the Cuban people have given new meaning to Che’s call to the nations of the world through the Tricontinental: “In our struggle, everything that is in dispute regarding tactics and the method of action for achieving limited objectives should be analyzed with due respect for differing opinions. However, we should be uncompromising regarding the larger strategic objective of our struggle: the total destruction of imperialism” (Guevara 1970 [1967]). In the words of José Martí (2002: 288–289),

We can no longer be a nation of fluttering leaves, spending our lives in the air, our treetop crowned in flowers, humming or creaking, caressed by the caprices of sunlight or thrashed and felled by tempests. The trees must form ranks to block the seven-league giant! It is the hour of reckoning and of marching in unison, and we must move in lines as compact as the veins of silver that lie at the roots of the Andes.

NOTES

1. As in my previous work, I use the term “external projection” instead of “foreign policy” to designate policies that may (or may not) contribute to the achievement of the objectives developed in Cuba’s interactions with other nations, including the work of popular organizations independent of the state that act within socialist civil society to develop and implement Cuban foreign policy.

2. As a result of the rapid convergence of the three organizations that participated in the struggle against the tyranny of Fulgencio Batista and, later, the transformation of the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations into the United Party of the Cuban Revolution, the Cuban Communist party was founded on October 1, 1965. On October 3, 1965, there was a public presentation of the first central committee of that organization.

3. The “negotiated decolonization” of the Caribbean islands, Belize, Guyana, and Surinam with their European metropolises (England and Holland) began in the early 1950s and had its

first results after 1962, the year that Jamaica and Trinidad-Tobago gained their independence from British imperialism. The whole process was supervised and mediated by the dominant factions, the powers that be, and successive U.S. administrations in agreement with the most conservative regional powers.

4. Although the Cuban government did not have close official relations with the Ecuadorian government of General Guillermo Rodríguez Lara (1973–1976) as it did with Panama and Peru, it did support all of its nationalist measures, such as the nationalization of oil and the defense of its 200-nautical-mile fishing limit, against the large U.S. and other imperialist monopolies. In 1975 it also recognized the military government's efforts to have the OAS pass a resolution that would allow its member nations to reestablish ties with Cuba.

5. It is impossible to reference all of Fidel Castro's speeches on these themes in the space available. Interested individuals can go to the web page of *Granma*, the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist party (<http://www.granma.cu/>).

6. In *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1988), Vladimir Ilich Lenin coined the term "semi-independent states" to refer to states that, although they may be more or less formally independent, have fallen into a "system of domination by the finance oligarchy" that is increasingly transnational. In this context, the Caribbean is the region of the underdeveloped world in which the most colonial or semicolonial territories continue to exist.

7. CARIFORUM was established by the Caribbean nations to open a dialogue with the European Union and the underdeveloped nations organized in the African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States (ACP). Although the Cuban government does not participate in the Lome and Cotonou accords signed with the EU, it is a member of the ACP Group.

8. The first of these little-known conferences (in which representatives of the U.S. and Canadian governments now participate) was held in Venezuela in September 1991.

9. Such a crisis has become manifest in the strengthening of official Cuban relations with the majority of the nations of the world, including those of Latin America and the Caribbean, and in the repeated passage by the United Nations General Assembly of the resolution on the necessity to put an end to the economic, financial, and commercial blockade imposed by the United States on Cuba.

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