

50 Years Since That Victorious January

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At The end of half a century, one question necessarily arises: what were the realities, the most prominent characteristics and tendencies that could be appreciated in the world in general and in Latin America in particular when the triumph of the Cuban Revolution took place on January 1, 1959?

One could say that, as a consequence of the new scenarios established as a result of World War II and the defeat of the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo axis, the world was predictably heading for the most acute moments of the so-called Cold War between the United States—as the already hegemonic head of the capitalist system and the Soviet Union, as the center of the recently born socialist system, fundamentally in Europe, but also with expressions in Asia—the case of the immense China—alongside Vietnam and Korea.

Perceived as a contradiction between two world systems, it is evident that capitalism enjoyed a palpable advantage, given that US imperialism, having emerged from the World War fortified and intact, was extending its tentacles at a vertiginous rate, even at the cost of its partners and allies, converting dominion, ideological influence and cultural penetration into an untouchable conjunction that had the former European colonialisms of earlier eras green with envy.

In Latin America and the Caribbean that dominion was exercised with particular inflexibility and roughness, and the "backyard," with very sporadic exceptions—rapidly asphyxiated generally in a bloody way—remained under US control in political and economic terms, forming a compact support group for all US initiatives in the international sphere, where anti-communism and anti-Sovietism were made to prevail as two sides of the same coin.

In Africa, with the might of the former powers left leaderless as a consequence of World War II, national liberation movements began to extend themselves, in particular the Algerian War, while imperialism maneuvered in certain nations by imposing neocolonial models that continued to ensure their plunder, as occurred in many of them that never attained a total and definitive liberation.

Nevertheless, people were witness to a still-imperceptible process that the so-called nations of the Third World were developing: a coming together in search for strengthened positions in order to attain shared objectives, a process favored by a new world correlation of forces, which had seized atomic monopoly from the United States and created a new balance of power.

Humanity was approaching what certain authors took to calling "a balance of terror," which, at that time, signified a strategic debilitation weakening of imperialism, which found its hands tied in specific circumstances, as was the case in the so-called Suez Crisis of 1956.

In the midst of those complex and contradictory circumstances, when US imperialism maintained a large part of its hegemonic power, came the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, despite Washington's efforts to influence it and avert the fulfillment of the revolutionary program, even before the Rebel Army's victory.

From that moment, Cuba was transformed as never before into a factor of strategic significance in world politics. Its role in Latin America and the Caribbean rose to unprecedented levels and its example of social development and resistance to imperialism demonstrated the possibility that the peoples of the Third World could likewise rise up if they had a just cause for which to fight and a consistent leadership.

Today, the world is very different from what it was 50 years ago; it is simultaneously enveloped in economic, energy, food and environmental crises which have reached the point of endangering the human species itself.

On the other hand, the hegemonic imperial domination of the United States is revealing evident signs of bankruptcy in all orders, which has led to a loss of its decisive influence not only in Latin America, its traditional backyard, but also in other areas of the world where, at the end of 2008, it was still bogged down in Afghanistan and Iraq and has been unable to impose the "pax Americana" in the Middle East.

Fifty years ago, US power elites were full of people who—on the basis of certain historical precedents and their own capacity for pressure and political coercion—believed that what was taking place in Cuba was nothing more than a simple revolt headed by a handful of dreamers, and that the powerful influence of the empire would restore order to the momentarily out of control island.

With the passing of time it became evident that, in the end, the dreamers in this case were the US rulers who, in a long succession of 10 presidents (to date), saw the frustration of a whole range of plots, conspiracies, intrigues and even assassination attempts, implemented to a greater or lesser degree over half a century, with the aim of crushing the Cuban Revolution and eliminating its historic leadership.

Contrary to the outlandish theses in vogue at that time, it was precisely the Cuban triumph that became a paradigm and example for Latin America and the Caribbean and, in general terms, for the peoples of the Third World, many of whom attained their independence in the 50s and 60s. It was no coincidence that successive US governments concentrated all their efforts, including military aggression, terrorism, espionage and sabotage, compounded by the implementation of the most ferocious and prolonged economic, commercial and financial blockade of Cuba, in order to sweep away that "pernicious" example.

Everything failed embarrassingly. The conscious heroism and elevated capacity for resistance of the Cuban people, prepared to defend their sovereign right to full independence and the social achievements of the Revolution, and to prevent the imposition of another political system by the United States, surprised some and prompted admiration in others, serving as an inspiration.

Fidel thus had reason to state that, after the Bay of Pigs, all the peoples were a little more free.

Neither the disintegration of the Soviet Union nor the collapse of the European socialist bloc could detain the series of profound social, economic and political changes that have been structured—particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean—despite the vain illusions of imperialism and its ideologues, who precipitously proclaimed that the "end of history" had arrived.

Just a glance at the current world, in full global economic and financial crisis provoked by the greed and insatiable voracity of the United States and its associates in the capitalist system, allows one to examine and understand what can happen from one day to the next.

Imperialist mechanisms can now be perceived as more and more debilitated and impotent in their attempts to defeat the aspirations of all the peoples, the emerging nations of the Third World and the whole gamut of social forces and movements, which clearly perceive the need to create a common front of struggle and, in this way, make a better world a possibility, as the universal slogan states.

Fifty years ago, the current planetary conformation would have seemed impossible: the realities, characteristics and tendencies of that time did not seem to favor a future of transformation and change, of social justice and absolute independence for nations.

Without any doubt, the Cuban nation marked a significant point of inflection. The inexhaustible undertaking of the peoples for a future free of exploitation and oppression received that encouragement and, not without effort and hard struggles, has made that contrast between the two eras. □□□

[Courtesy : Granma International, Havana]