

Who wants to be in the garbage dump?

Today, by mere chance, I remembered that the OAS still exists, when I read a cable posted on the Internet which contained an article by Georgina Saldierna, published in La Jornada, titled "Insulza rules out the possibility of re-admitting Cuba into the OAS". No one even remembered the OAS. Note how retrograde this line of reasoning is.

Yesterday, the Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), Jose Miguel Insulza, dismissed the possibility of immediately re-admitting Cuba into this multilateral organization because there is no consensus on the matter among its members, among other reasons.

In this connection, Insulza remarked that, for full re-admission into the OAS, one of the requisites Cuba would have to meet is adhering to the norms of the organization, including the Inter-American Democratic Charter and the Convention on Human Rights.

If this isn't comical enough, read Antonio Caño's article, published in El Pais on February 21, 2008, titled "Cuba's Isolation only Serves the Purpose of Perpetuating the Agony of the System."

"One of the most respected voices among Cuban exiles, businessman Carlos Saladrigas (Cuba 1948) hopes that Fidel Castro's resignation could represent "the open door for permanent changes" and asks the Cuban community in Miami and the Government of the U.S. to act "cautiously" and with a "spirit of reconciliation", to avoid losing this opportunity."

"Saladrigas, who is President of a small organization known as the Cuba Study Group, which is composed by other political associations and human rights organizations known as Consenso Cubano, has spent millions of his private funds in the last few years in order to plant the seeds for a modern and centrist alternative to the radical leadership that used to dominate the Cuban exile community in the U.S. In the leadership vacuum in which Miami found itself after the death of Jorge Mas Canosa, Saladrigas is a respected voice in intellectual circles and listened by the media and foreign diplomats."

"During a phone conversation from the Dominican Republic, Saladrigas expressed his belief that (...) Cuba's isolation only serves the purpose of perpetuating the agony which the regimen represents".

"In his opinion this is the time for great hope, both for Cuban exiles, as well as for dissidents inside the island".

"The exile community must help by stimulating the steps that will begin to take place in Cuba and by not rejecting them. Transitions are made one step at a time".

"It is important", says Saladrigas, "that the regimen loose its fear of the exile community, because the lesser the fear, the faster things will move along". Change, in his opinion, is unstoppable (...)"

"There are a million Cubans in Florida with sufficient resources to revitalize the economy of the Island in very little time, given adequate conditions, which must be created both by the U.S. and in Cuba: by the U.S. lifting restrictions to U.S. citizens wishing to invest in Cuba, and by Cuba, legalizing private property and foreign economic activity."

"Once these conditions have been achieved, according to Saladrigas, political reforms will follow automatically. The most urgent measures should be the release of all political prisoners. Once this has been done, and the door has been opened to investments, the exile community could become the

biggest support fund that any political transition has ever known throughout history.”

The name Carlos Saladrigas rings a bell; it is a name I heard many times when, at 18 years old I was concluding my fifth and last year of high school. He was the candidate Batista had chosen at the close of the last year of his constitutional term. Before, he had been his Prime Minister. The Second World War was coming to an end.

The new Carlos Saladrigas now wants to buy us for peanuts! With the money in Miami, “the biggest support fund that any political transition has ever known throughout history.” This is something the United States has never achieved, not even with all of the money in the world.

The facts are quite different and they are evident to those who follow events in Cuba objectively.

An article by David Brooks, published less than 12 hours ago by Mexico’s La Jornada, titled “The United States relegated to mere spectator of Cuba’s political transition” employs arguments which ought to be emphasized.

Brooks notes that he does not cease to be amazed by how one of the smallest countries in the world obliges the political, business, media and academic leaders of the world’s most powerful nation to respond to its decisions of doing or not doing, changing or not changing, or simply leaving everything shrouded in mystery.

In the past 24 hours, he stresses, President George W. Bush, senior State Department and National Security Council officials, federal legislators, the presidential pre-candidates and other top-level political figures, political analysts and the main foreign policy institutions, all printed and electronic media, human rights organizations and others have responded to Fidel Castro’s decision of not running for another term in office.

“While a political transition is underway in Cuba, no one in the United States, according to Brooks, expects any changes to take place in the few months that remain of term of George W. Bush, the tenth U.S. president who promised to impose changes in Cuba only to reach the end of his term and see Fidel Castro still defending his country’s policy and defying the superpower.

“Once again, he adds, Washington and all of the experts were reduced to mere spectators and had to recognize that the transition is to be determined by Cuba and is not the result of the policy Washington has pursued for half a century.”

“He points out that Julia Sweig, an expert on the bilateral relations between the two countries and director of the Latin American program for the Council on Foreign relations underscored that the embargo and other restrictions, which have only served to limit U.S. foreign policy at this pivotal moment, should already have been lifted.

“Ex Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson,” Brooks writes, “General Collin Powell’s right-hand man and currently co-chair of the New America Foundation’s U.S.-Cuba Policy Initiative again remarked that this juncture is an opportunity to change the United States’ posture, admitting that ‘our Cuba policy is a failure’ and that no changes were likely under the current presidency. The presidential candidates and others should begin to analyze this policy, including obvious things like lifting travel restrictions and some aspects of the embargo, so that the next president can implement some changes.”

As Brooks points out, the New York Times echoes these arguments in today’s editorial, arguing that “the administration has gone out of its way to ensure that it has no chance of influencing events there. In the name of tightening the failed embargo, it has made it much harder for academics, artists and religious people to travel to Cuba and spread the good word about democracy (...).” The Times proposes putting Miami’s interests aside, even if it’s particularly difficult in an electoral year, to enter into direct communication with “Mr. Castro’s successors”.

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“Following Castro’s announcement in Havana,” according to Brooks, “the United State’s political dynamic can also change. The three main presidential pre-candidates commented on the matter yesterday. Republican John McCain and Democrat Hillary Clinton repeated the old rhetoric that Cuba must show changes before Washington can consider changing its policy.

“Democrat Barack Obama –who, as candidate for Senate in 2003, was in favor of lifting the embargo—has now qualified his position, but he is the only one who has supported a relaxation of restrictions on travel and the sending of remittances to Cuba, stating, yesterday, that if there are signs of democratization on the island “the United States must be prepared to begin taking steps to normalize relations and to ease the embargo (...)”

According to the Wall Street Journal, “we have had a bad policy for nearly 50 years, for bad reasons that have nothing to do with Cuba” federal representative Charles Rangel, chair of one of Congress’ most influential committees, declared. Several other legislators regard this moment as a possible opening to promote changes in bilateral policy.

“The business sector,” he adds, “which for years has expressed its opposition to the blockade, could also see this as an opportunity to redouble their efforts to change U.S. policy, turning to the bipartisan support of legislators and governors who see the Cuban market as something more attractive than maintaining an ideological position aligned with a president and government that are increasingly discredited in Washington.

“Apparently, the transition in Cuba could cause a transition within the United States, according to the article. But perhaps Washington and Miami are more opposed to change than Havana.”

As the readers will appreciate, I have done some work as I await the historical decision of the 24th.

Now, I will go several days without putting pen to paper.

Fidel Castro Ruz

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