

STEPHEN HARPER'S ILLUSIONS

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The leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, said in his latest written reflections that the Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the US President Barack Obama should be questioned about what position will they assume towards the Malvinas issue in the upcoming Americas Summit.

Full Text of Reflections of Fidel Castro:

I think -and I do not intend to offend anyone- that this is how the Prime Minister of Canada is called. I deduced it from a statement published on "Holy Wednesday" by a spokesperson of the Foreign Ministry of that country. The United Nations Organization membership is made up by almost 200 States -allegedly independent States. They continuously change or are forced into change. Many of their representatives are honorable persons, friends of Cuba; but it is impossible to remember the specifics about each and every one of them.

During the second half of the twentieth century, I had the privilege of living through years of intensive erudition and I realized that Canadians, located in the northernmost region of this hemisphere, were always respectful towards our country. They invested in areas of their interest and traded with Cuba, but they did not interfere in the internal affairs of our State.

The revolutionary process that began on January 1st, 1959, did not introduce any measure that affected their interests, which were taken into account by the Revolution in maintaining normal and constructive relations with the authorities of that country where a significant effort was being made in the interest of its own development. Thus, they were not accomplices of the economic blockade, the war and the mercenary invasion that the United States launched against Cuba.

In May of 1948, the year that witnessed the foundation of the OAS, an institution with a shameful history which did away with what little was left from the dreams of the Liberators of the Americas, Canada was from belonging to it. It kept that same status for more than 40 years, until 1990. Some of its leaders visited us. One of them was Pierre Elliott Trudeau, a brilliant and courageous politician who died prematurely. We attended his burial on behalf of Cuba.

The OAS is supposed to be a regional organization made up by the sovereign States of this hemisphere. Such an assertion, like many others which are made everyday, involves a great number of lies. The least we can do is to be aware of them, if we are to preserve the spirit of struggle and our confidence on a more decent world.

The OAS is supposed to be a pan-American organization. Any country in Europe, Africa, Asia or Oceania could not belong to the OAS just because it has a colony, as it is the case of

France in Guadeloupe; or the Netherlands in Curaçao. But the British colonialism could not define the status of Canada and explain whether it was a colony, a republic or a kingdom.

The Head of State of Canada is Queen Elizabeth II, although she vests her powers upon a Governor-General appointed by her. Therefore, we could ask whether the United Kingdom is also part of the OAS.

Likewise, the Honorable Foreign Minister of Canada does not dare to say whether or not he supports Argentina in the thorny issue of the Malvinas Islands. He has only expressed beatific wishes for peace to prevail between the two countries. But Great Britain has there its biggest military base outside its territory in violation of Argentina's sovereignty. It did not apologize for having sunk the 'General Belgrano' cruiser which was sailing outside the jurisdictional waters that they themselves established which led to the futile sacrifice of hundreds of youths who were doing their military service. We should ask Obama and Harper what stand they will take in the face of the fairest claim by Argentina to be given back the sovereignty over the islands so that it is no longer deprived of the energy and fishing resources it so much needs to develop the country.

I was really amazed after I made a much deeper analysis of the activities carried out by Canadian transnationals in Latin America. I knew about the damage caused by the Yankees to the people of Canada. They forced the country to look for oil by extracting it from huge extensions of sand that are impregnated with that fluid, thus causing an irreparable damage to the environment of that beautiful and extensive country.

The incredible damage was the one caused to millions of persons by the Canadian companies specialized in the mining of gold, precious metals and radioactive materials.

An article published by the website Alainet a week ago, signed by an Engineer on Environmental Quality, which provides further details about an issue that has been identified innumerable times as one of the main scourges that affect millions of persons, stated that mining companies, 60 per cent of which are financed with Canadian capital, worked following the logic of maximum yield at a low cost and in a short time; and that these conditions turn out to be all the more advantageous if in the places where they are stationed, tax revenues are minimal and there are very few environmental and social commitments...

According to the article, the mining laws in our countries [...] do not include any obligation or methodology to control environmental or social impacts; the tax revenues that mining companies pay to the countries of the region are, as an average, no more than 1.5 per cent of the revenues received.

The article adds that the social struggle against mining, particularly metal mining, has been growing as long as entire generations are becoming aware of the environmental and social impacts it causes.

It states that Guatemala has put up an admirable resistance against mining projects, thanks to the indigenous populations' awareness of the value of their territories and their natural resources, which they consider a priceless ancestral heritage. However, in the last 10 years, the consequences of that struggle have been felt in the assassination of 120 human rights' activists and advocates.

This article also describes the current situation in El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica, with figures that make us meditate very deeply about the seriousness and harshness of the ruthless pillaging that is being carried out against the natural resources of our countries, thus mortgaging the future of Latin Americans.

The presence of Dilma Rousseff, who made a stopover in Washington while traveling back to her country, will serve to persuade Obama that although there are some who take great delight in making slushy speeches, Latin America is far from being a choir of countries begging for alms.

The guayabera shirts to be worn by Obama in Cartagena has become one of the main issues covered by the news agencies: "Edgar Gómez [...] has designed one for the US President, Barack Obama, who will be wearing it during the Summit of the Americas", said the daughter of the designer, who added: "It is a white, sober guayabera, with a handiwork that is more striking than usual..."

Immediately after that, the news agency added that the Caribbean shirt was first made by the banks of the Yayabo River in Cuba; that is why they were originally called yayaberas.

The curious thing about this, dear readers, is that Cuba has been forbidden to attend that meeting, but not the guayaberas. Who could hold back from laughing? We must hurry up and tell Harper.

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