

SWIMMING UPSTREAM

Following Obama's speech, on May 23 this year, to the Cuban American National Foundation established by Ronald Reagan, I wrote a reflection entitled "The Empire's Hypocritical Policy". It was dated on the 25th of the same month.

In that Reflection I quoted his exact words to the Miami annexationists: "[...] together we will stand up for freedom in Cuba; this is my word and my commitment [...] It's time to let Cuban American money make their families less dependent upon the Castro regime. [...] I will maintain the embargo."

I then offered several arguments and unethical examples of the general behavior of the Presidents who preceded the one who would be elected to that position on the November 4 elections. I literally wrote:

"I find myself forced to raise various sensitive questions:

1. Is it right for the President of the United States to order the assassination of any one person in the world, whatever the pretext may be?
2. Is it ethical for the President of the United States to order the torture of other human beings?
3. Should state terrorism be used by a country as powerful as the United States as an instrument to bring about peace on the planet?
4. Is an Adjustment Act, applied as punishment on only one country, Cuba, in order to destabilize it, good and honorable, even when it costs innocent children and mothers their lives? If it is good, why is this right not automatically granted to Haitians, Dominicans, and other peoples of the Caribbean, and why isn't the same Act applied to Mexicans and people from Central and South America, who die like flies against the Mexican border wall or in the waters of the Atlantic and the Pacific?
5. Can the United States do without immigrants, who grow vegetables, fruits, almonds and other delicacies for Americans? Who would sweep their streets, work as servants in their homes or do the worst and lowest-paid jobs?
6. Are crackdowns on illegal residents fair, even as they affect children born in the United States?
7. Are the brain-drain and the continuous theft of the best scientific and intellectual minds in poor countries moral and justifiable?
8. You state, as I pointed out at the beginning of this reflection, that your country had long ago warned European powers that it would not tolerate any intervention in the hemisphere, reiterating that this right be respected while demanding the right to intervene anywhere in the world with the aid of hundreds of military bases and naval, aerial and spatial forces distributed across the planet. I ask: is that the way in which the United States expresses its respect for freedom, democracy and human rights?
9. Is it fair to stage pre-emptive attacks on sixty or more dark corners of the world, as Bush calls them, whatever the pretext may be?
10. Is it honorable and sound to invest millions upon millions of dollars in the military industrial complex, to produce weapons that can destroy life on earth several times over?"

I could have included several other issues.

Despite the caustic questions, I was not unkind to the African American candidate. I perceived he had greater capacity and command of the art of politics than his adversaries, not only in the opposing party but in his own, too.

Last week, the American President-elect Barack Obama announced his Economic Recovery Program.

Monday, December 1st, he introduced his National Security and Foreign Policy teams.

"Vice President-elect Biden and I are pleased to announce our national security team [...] old conflicts remain unresolved, and newly assertive powers have put strains on the international system. The spread of nuclear weapons raises the peril that the world's deadliest technology could fall into dangerous hands. Our dependence on foreign oil empowers authoritarian governments and endangers our planet."

"...our economic power must sustain our military strength, our diplomatic leverage, and our global leadership."

"We will renew old alliances and forge new and enduring partnerships [...] American values are America's greatest export to the world."

"...the team that we have assembled here today is uniquely suited to do just that."

"...these men and women represent all of those elements of American power [...] they have served in uniform and as diplomats [...] they share my pragmatism about the use of power, and my sense of purpose about America's role as a leader in the world."

"I have known Hillary Clinton...", he says.

I am mindful of the fact that she was President-elect Barack Obama's rival and the wife of President Clinton, who signed the extraterritorial Torricelli and Helms Burton Acts against Cuba. During the presidential race she committed herself with these laws and with the economic blockade. I am not complaining, I am simply stating it for the record.

"I am proud that she will be our next Secretary of State," said Obama. "[she] will command respect in every capitol; and who will clearly have the ability to advance our interests around the world. Hillary's appointment is a sign to friend and foe of the seriousness of my commitment..."

"At a time when we face an unprecedented transition amidst two wars, I have asked Robert Gates to continue as Secretary of Defense..."

"[...] I will be giving Secretary Gates and our military a new mission as soon as I take office: responsibly ending the war in Iraq through a successful transition to Iraqi control."

It strikes me that Gates is a Republican, not a Democrat. He is the only one who has been Defense Secretary and Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, that is, he has occupied these positions under both Democratic and Republican Administrations. Gates, who is aware of his popularity, has said that first made sure that the President-elect was choosing him for as long as necessary.

On the other hand, while Condoleezza Rice was traveling to India and Pakistan under Bush's instructions to mediate in the tense relations between these two countries, two days ago, the minister of Defense from Brazil gave the green light to a Brazilian company to manufacture MAR-1 missiles, but instead of one a month, as it had been the case until now, it will produce five every month. One hundred of these missiles will be sold to Pakistan at an estimated cost of 85 million euros.

In a public statement, the minister said that “these missiles that can be attached to planes have been designed to locate ground radars. They allow the effective monitoring of both the ground and air space.”

As for Obama, he continued unflappable his Monday statement: “And going forward, we will continue to make the investments necessary to strengthen our military and increase our ground forces to defeat the threats of the 21st century.”

On Janet Napolitano, he indicated: “[she] offers the experience and executive skill that we need in the next Secretary of Homeland Security...”

“Janet assumes this critical role having learned the lessons – some of them painful – of the last several years, from 9/11 to Katrina [...] She understands as well as anyone the danger of an insecure border. And she will be a leader who can reform a sprawling Department while safeguarding our homeland.”

This familiar figure had been appointed a District Attorney in Arizona by Clinton in 1993, and then promoted to State Attorney General in 1998. Later on, in 2002, she became a Democratic Party candidate and then governor of that bordering state which is the most common incoming route used by illegal immigrants. She was elected governor in 2006.

About Susan Elizabeth Rice, he said: “Susan knows that the global challenges we face demand global institutions that work... We need the UN to be more effective as a venue for collective action – against terror and proliferation; climate change and genocide; poverty and disease.”

On National Security Advisor James Jones he said: “[...] I am convinced that General James Jones is uniquely suited to be a strong and skilled National Security Advisor. Generations of Joneses have served heroically on the battlefield – from the beaches of Tarawa in World War II, to Foxtrot Ridge in Vietnam. Jim's Silver Star is a proud part of that legacy [...] He has commanded a platoon in battle, served as Supreme Allied Commander in a time of war, (he means NATO and the Gulf War) and worked on behalf of peace in the Middle East.”

“Jim is focused on the threats of today and the future. He understands the connection between energy and national security, and has worked on the frontlines of global instability – from Kosovo to northern Iraq to Afghanistan.”

“He will advise me and work effectively to integrate our efforts across the government, so that we are effectively using all elements of American power to defeat unconventional threats and promote our values.”

“I am confident that this is the team that we need to make a new beginning for American national security.”

Obama is somebody we can talk to anywhere he wishes since we do not preach violence or war. He should me reminded, though, that the stick and carrot doctrine will have no place in our country.

None of the phrases in his latest speech shows any element of response to the questions I raised last May 25, just six months ago.

I will not say now that Obama is any less smart. On the contrary, he is showing the mental faculties that enabled me to see and compare his capacity with that of his mediocre adversary, John McCain, who was almost rewarded for his “exploits” merely due to the traditions of the American society. If it had not been for the economic crisis, television and the Internet, Obama would not have won the elections against the omnipotent racism. It also helped that he studied first in the University of Columbia, where he graduated in Political Sciences, and then in Harvard where he graduated as a lawyer. This enabled

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him to become a member of the modestly rich class with only several million dollars. He is certainly not Abraham Lincoln, nor are these times similar to those. That society is today a consumer society where the saving habits have been lost while the spending habit has multiplied.

Somebody had to offer a calm and serene response even though this will have to swim up the powerful stream of hopes raised by Obama in the international public opinion.

I only have two more press dispatches left to analyze. They all carry news from everywhere. I have estimated that only the United States will be spending in this economic crisis over \$6 trillion in paper money, an amount that can only be assessed by the rest of the peoples of the world with their sweat and hunger, their suffering and blood.

Our principles are the same as those of Baraguá. The empire should know that our Homeland can be turned to dust but the sovereign rights of the Cuban people are not negotiable.

Fidel Castro Ruz

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