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LOOKING BACK A DECADE
AND A YEAR

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The Latins had an expression: "tempora mutantur nos et mutamur in illis", the times are changed and we change with them.

Looking backwards and relating what you see to the present is always an interesting exercise. Moreover, it is the key to understanding history.

Let us take, arbitrarily, August and September 1960, eleven years ago.

They were debating the admission of People's China at the United Nations and the Soviet Union was demanding an end to what was still a relatively limited intervention of the United States in Indo-China. Now, a decade and a year later, both of these vital issues are reaching a climax. The United States, self-styled gendarme of the world, has been humbled by history. Its world strategy has been blunted and its policy agonizingly reappraised. It has been forced to recognize the fact that the people of the world have expressed themselves, to use another Latin expression, "police verso", with their thumbs turned downwards.

Eleven years ago, in August 1960, the Cuban government nationalized U.S. holdings in Cuba, the petroleum refineries, the telephone and electric companies and 36 sugar mills.

American owned refineries in Cuba had refused to process crude oil brought in by Cuban government. The Cubans reacted to this affront by taking over the management of the Texaco Refinery. The U.S. government delivered what it hoped would be a mortal blow to the Cuban economy; it suspended the purchase of Cuba's main export, sugar. The U.S. never expected such an audacious response from Cuba, just 90 miles away from their shores. When Fidel Castro went to the United Nations in September 1960, a few weeks after the nationalization, he was confined by U.S. authorities to the island of Manhattan. Once again the Cubans hit back; they confined U.S. ambassador Bonsal to the Vedado section of Havana.

From that time on the United States used every device, open and covert, to overthrow the Cuban revolutionary government. It initiated its own economic blockade and pressured other governments to follow suit. It stepped up its aid to the counterrevolutionary bands in the Escambray mountains and in the cities. Preparations for an invasion which culminated in the landing at the Bay of Pigs went into high gear in Central America and at U.S. bases.

Eleven years ago in August and September, Cuba reaffirmed her sovereign right to make a revolution in the face of opposition by the United States government and its puppets on a string south of the border. In late August the Foreign Ministers Conference of the Organization of American States meeting at San Jose, Costa Rica voted a resolution -- Made in USA -- to condemn Cuba for its independent foreign policy and especially for its relations with the socialist camp. Cuban foreign Minister Saul Ros launched a verbal machete charge which slashed at the right of the OAS to tell Cuba how and with whom to conduct its foreign relations.

On September 3, 1960 Fidel Castro told more than one million people in Revolutionary Square:

"Our people have the right to follow their own destiny. Our people have the right to count on government leaders who do not defend the rights of the exploiters..."

Castro asked the Cubans assembled in the Square:

"Who is guilty for the fact that we have made this revolution -- the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China or Yankee imperialism?"

The million voices responded: "Yankee imperialism....."

The million voices, constituted as a General National Assembly of the People of Cuba also approved, by acclamation, the First Declaration of Havana. The Declaration accused United States imperialism of having transformed... "Our America -- the America that Bolivar, Hidalgo, Juarez, San Martin, O'Higgins, Saenz, Tiredentes and Marti wanted free -- into a zone of exploitation, into a backyard of the financial and political empire of the Yankees."

Today, Cuba no longer stands alone in its defiance to U.S. imperialism on the American continent. Other Latin American countries have chosen the revolutionary path of confronting U.S. political and economic control. Other countries have taken steps to break the back of the national oligarchies who put their own and foreign interests above those of the people.

The Chilean people have chosen a socialist government that has nationalized the basic riches of the country recognized Cuba and other socialist countries and is prepared to carry out the revolution to its ultimate consequences. The Peruvian people are led by a government that has carried out a deep-seated land reform, has nationalized the fish-processing industry and has opened up relations with the socialist camp. The Bolivian government, impelled by a powerful movement of workers, farmers and students, seems to be on the brink of a confrontation with oligarchic and reactionary forces. In Uruguay, where the educational activities of urban guerrilla groups have acted as a catalyst, the "Broad Front" with its program for fundamental changes stands a very good chance of winning the Fall elections.

Cuba is no longer alone as it was eleven years ago. Other countries have promulgated agrarian reforms and have nationalized foreign holdings. Other countries have opened up viable economic and political relations with members of the socialist camp.

The United States learned in Cuba (as it did in Vietnam) that threats and aggression are no longer infallible means of imposing its policy on small countries. In Cuba they learned that neither aggressions or economic pressures can bring a popularly based revolutionary government to its knees.

Over this decade and a year, American imperialism did win some victories over popular forces: Indonesia in Asia, Guinea in Africa and Santo Domingo in Latin America. Nobody in today's world underestimates its brutality and its material resources. But as the Latins did say, "tempora mutantur nos et metamur in illis." It has been definitively proven that U.S. imperialism is far from invincible. Proof of this is that new cries for independence and national dignity are superimposing themselves on the defiant cry of the First Declaration of Havana in September 1960 which is still echoing throughout the American continent.

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