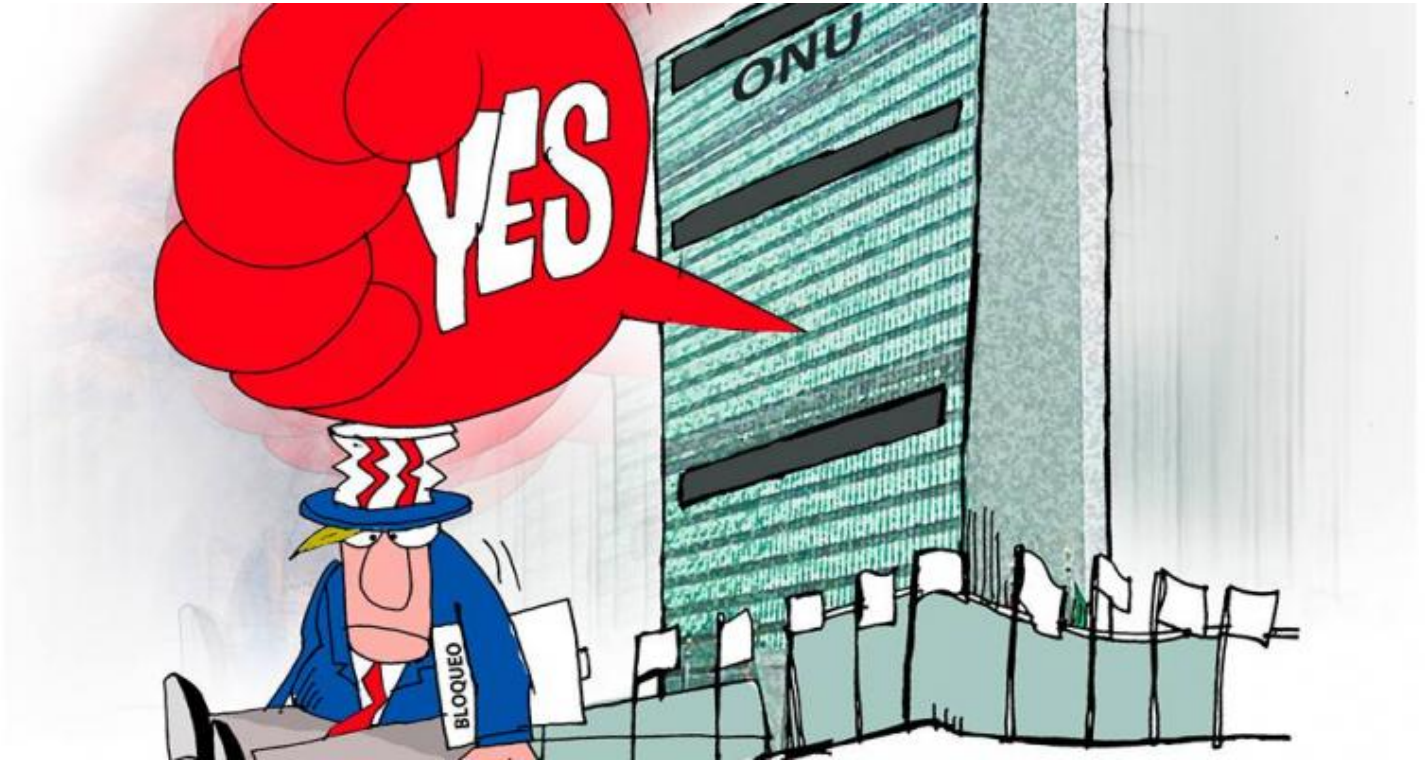




Notes on the Revolution / Column #29



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The world condemns the blockade of Cuba, imperialism in a crude form

By Charles McKelvey

On October 7, by a vote of 187 to 3, with two abstentions, the General Assembly of the United Nations voted in favor of the Cuban resolution on “the need to end the economic, commercial, and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America on Cuba.” Only the United States, Israel, and Brazil voted against the resolution; Colombia and Ukraine abstained. The General Assembly has approved the resolution every year since 1992, with wider margins in more recent years. Anayansi Rodríguez, Vice-Minister of Foreign Relations, in a telephone communication with the evening news program Mesa Redonda, described it as a resounding victory for the principles and Charter of the United Nations.

On October 6, in the debate on the resolution, a number of representatives of associations of governments expressed support of their respective blocs for the Cuban resolution. They included the Non-Aligned Movement, with 120 member states and 15 observers; the African Group; the African Union; the Organization of Islamic Cooperation; the Caribbean Community;



and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The Non-Aligned Movement has expressed the view that the most important human right is the right to development. In accordance with this view, the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, Bashar Jafari, declared that the U.S. blockade is a violation of the right of Cuba to development. In this regard, it ought not be forgotten that on July 6, 1960, the Cuban Revolutionary Government emitted a law that authorized nationalization of U.S. properties in Cuba, when the President and Prime Minister deem it to be in the national interest. The law mandated the National Bank of Cuba to create a fund for the compensation of the nationalized properties, a fund that would be fed by Cuban government deposits in an amount equal to 25% of the value of U.S. purchases of Cuban sugar in excess of annual sugar quota in place at that time. Thirty days later, when the first nationalizations of U.S. property were announced, Prime Minister Fidel Castro reiterated the Cuban proposal. The idea was to maintain the Cuba-USA sugar trade, but increase its quantity in order to fund compensation as well as investments in Cuban industrial development. It was a proposal that envisioned the transformation of the historic exploitative relation between the United States and Cuba into a relation defined by the principals of North-South cooperation, which would have benefited the Cuban revolutionary project and the people of the United States, and it would have been an important example to the world, suggesting the possibilities for transformation from a neocolonial world-system to a more just, democratic and sustainable world-system.

The Cuban proposal was rejected by the United States, which cut the sugar quota, rather than expand it. How different would have been the Cuban path to development, if the United States had accepted the proposal? What level of development could Cuba have attained, if a cooperative relation with the United States had been initiated in 1960? Taking such lost potentialities into account, we would have to acknowledge that the full costs to Cuba of the blockade are incalculable, and that current calculations by the Cuban Revolutionary Government represent only a fraction of the full cost of the blockade. Such calculations are based on actual situations, such as the additional costs paid for medicines because of lack of access to the U.S. pharmaceutical market. These calculable costs have accumulated to more than 138 billion dollars in nearly six decades, and any negotiations of compensation for nationalized U.S. properties ought to take into account these calculable damages to Cuban economic development.

Sometimes it is said that the blockade is a Cold War anachronism. However, we have to keep in mind that the Cold War was an ideological construction that obscured the true nature of the conflict that the United States, as the dominant neocolonial power, has with nations that seek an autonomous road of true sovereignty. Even though the Cold War ideology is no longer useful, the need for a pretext for U.S. aggression remains, inasmuch as some nations continue to defy the rules of the neocolonial world-system and insist on their sovereignty and their right to protect their natural resources. Indeed, during the last two decades, their numbers have grown, and they are increasingly cooperating with one another in developing an alternative world-system that promotes mutually beneficial trade and protects the sovereignty of nations.

There is, therefore, a certain logic to the blockade. It seeks to make an example of Cuba, so that other nations will know that any nation that seeks sovereignty will be severely punished.

Castigating Cuba is in no sense anachronistic. Cuba is central to the fundamental conflict of our time: the conflict between the minority who benefit from imperialism and the majority who are the victims of imperialism, as was recently expressed by Ralph Gonzales, Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The blockade is an imperialist strategy, and the debate on the blockade is made complex by the fact that there is a sector of the U.S. political establishment that wants to adopt another imperialist strategy, another strategy for destroying the example of the Cuban Revolution. This



sector argues that the blockade has not worked and damages the prestige of the United States.

This more moderate wing of imperialism favors bringing down the revolution by less brutal and less crude methods. Obama, for example, wanted to support the Cuban class of small entrepreneurs, which has growing space in Cuba because of changes in the Cuban social and economic model. Obama's intention was that this class would develop class consciousness and would promote its particular interests, which would coincide with the interests of US capitalists, thereby facilitating the erosion of Cuban socialism via the penetration of capitalist interests that would influence the political process.

We can free ourselves from this internal debate between crude and smart forms of imperialism by focusing on the limitations of imperialism itself. The logic of imperialism assumes that the neocolonial world-system is sustainable, that global affairs can continue to be defined by competing imperial powers, some rising and some falling, with each pursuing its interests. This assumption ignores the fact that the world-system has reached and overextended the geographical and ecological limits of the earth; and it ignores that fact that the neocolonized peoples of the world are in a permanent condition of rebellion and revolution against the neocolonial world-system. Under these conditions, the world-system cannot attain political stability and economic sustainability without casting aside imperialism. An alternative world order is necessary.

We must be opposed to imperialism, regardless of the imperialist strategy undertaken. We ought to have consciousness of the fact that an alternative world order is necessary for humanity, and the road to an alternative, more just, democratic, and sustainable world-system is being forged by those nations that are insisting today on their sovereignty, and they are being castigated for it by a neocolonial hegemonic power in economic decline and moral decadence.

In Cuba, it is common to distinguish between the government of the United States, which has persistently pursued imperialist policies; and the people of the United States, which has had its honorable moments. Keeping this distinction in mind, let us recognize that an anti-imperialist popular movement in the United States is possible, if the people were to be led by a vanguard with the capacity to discern and explain the correct and necessary road.

This is Charles McKelvey, reflecting on the unfolding global popular socialist revolution forged by our peoples in defense of humanity.

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