

A Marshall Plan for Cuba

Monday 31 January 2011, by [BORON Atilio A.](#) (Date first published: 5 January 2011).

Contents

- [‘Strict justice’](#)
- [Resistance](#)

Cuba is currently faced with a crucial dilemma: either it updates, revises and reconstructs its economic model or it runs the risk of succumbing to the combined pressures created by its own errors and the aggression of the US embargo. The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as all of those in Africa and Asia, cannot remain indifferent towards this situation or limit themselves to contemplating how the revolution delivered this decisive battle without any assistance other than their own strength.

Help, however, cannot be confined to verbal support, which is fine but insufficient. Cuba needs something more concrete: that its creditors, and in particular that the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, cancel Cuba's external debt.

Argentina is Cuba's main creditor, due to a loan which was granted by the government of Hector Campora and his minister of economy Jose B. Gelbard in 1973 and which the ex-minister of foreign affairs of Kirchner's government, Rafael Bielsa, renegotiated by proposing a reduction of 50% of the amount. By combining the capital and the accumulation of interest, this debt rose to approximately US\$1.8 billion. At the same time, the minister of the economy Roberto Lavagna proposed to the creditors of Argentina a reduction of 75% on the nominal value of Argentina's debt in default with the collapse of the exchange rate in December 2001. As we know, Argentina finally obtained a reduction of around 70% of the value of its debt. Argentina should at least guarantee to Cuba the same treatment which Argentina received from its creditors.

‘Strict justice’

This would be the minimum. What is needed, which would be ethically impeccable is that Argentina cancel this debt and therefore lighten the burden weighing on the sister republic. The 1147 inhabitants of Argentina who have recovered their sight free of charge thanks to Operation Milagro during this last year at the Doctor Ernesto Guevara of Cordoba Ophthalmologic Centre and the more than 20,000 people who have become literate learning to read and write thanks to the Cuban program Yo si puedo are some of the reasons to cancel the debt. It would be an act of strict justice.

Equally the governments of Mexico, which has claims to the amount of \$500 million, Panama (\$200 million), Brazil (\$40 million), Trinidad and Tobago (\$30 million) and Uruguay (\$30 million) should do the same.

Why a question of strict justice? For many different reasons but we will talk only about two. First, as a just reciprocation for Cuba's generous internationalism without equal which has driven this Cuban Revolution and transcended its frontiers in sending doctors, nurses, dentists, educators and sports instructors throughout the entire world, while the US empire and its allies saturate the world with soldiers, "special commandos", spies, intelligence agents, police and terrorists.

During the last decade Cuba has sent 135,000 health professionals to more than 100 countries

worldwide, particularly in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa, but also in Asia. Cuban doctors were in Haiti well before the fateful earthquake and afterwards their numbers rose while the US sent ... marines! Cuban aid in combating sickness and preventing death in much of the country has been and is concrete and effective.

Now the people and the nations of the developing world should rush to help this lighthouse of national and social liberation which for more than a half-century has inspired and illuminated the noblest fights of our people. They should do this with an activist solidarity which turns itself into effective economic aid.

Statements will be welcome but insufficient.

Resistance

Then there is a moral obligation for helping Cuba because we think of what would have happened to our countries if the Cuban Revolution had not resisted the pressures of imperialism and of the global right wing after the collapse of the Soviet Union? This ideological and political change was materialised by the ascension and consolidation of the power of Hugo Chavez, Evo Morales and Rafael Correa — to mention only the most significant — could it have taken place with Cuba kneeling, defeated and disarmed faced with restoration of the national pillage, which Cuba had been subjected to since 1898, its dreams and its humanist utopia destroyed by the triumphant return of capitalist mafias like those which are rampant right now in the defunct Soviet Union?

Moreover would the advent, at the beginning of this century, of a very moderate centre-left in countries such as Argentina, Brazil or Uruguay have been possible without the heroic resistance of Cuba, the “bad example”, which has a lower infant mortality rate — despite an embargo and assaults — than that of the United States? No way!

In addition to the reasons unique to each of these cases, these advances have been made possible thanks to the resistance of Cuba. If Cuba had surrendered and become a protectorate of the United States, the tsunami of the right would have ravaged this part of the world. Thanks to Cuba, our people have avoided a catastrophe of such magnitude.

It is for these reasons that, as well as cancelling its existing debts with the countries of the region, the creditor countries (along with those which are not) should without delay create a special fund of solidarity with the Cuban Revolution. The United Nations did it to save the Europeans in the stampede after World War II and its success has been extraordinary. The Marshall Plan has fully satisfied the expectations that arose and the European economies have rapidly recovered.

Cuba, which [has been robbed of] the equivalent of two Marshall Plans — in effect, such is the cost today of the US embargo on the fragile Cuban economy — largely deserves a similar gesture from its sister Latin American nations.

Latin America countries have enormous reserves in their central banks. In 2007, Ecuador's President Rafael Correa calculated that the existing reserves in the region were around \$200 billion and this figure has not stopped rising during subsequent years. Statistics from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) indicate that at the end of 2009 Argentina's international reserves rose to \$49.5 billion, Brazil's to \$238.5 billion, Mexico's to \$90.8 billion, Chile's to \$26.1 billion, Colombia's to \$32.8 billion, Peru's to \$32.8 billion and Venezuela's to \$35.8 billion. With the increase recorded in 2010, the combined reserves of these countries — plus those of Bolivia, Ecuador and Uruguay, which were not recorded in this statistical study — would be more than \$500 billion. Hence the enormous importance of creating as quickly as possible the Bank of the South which remains hampered by bureaucratic excuses and by political short-sightedness which is shown by certain

governments.

By assigning just 2% of these fabulous reserves one could create, without too much effort, a special fund of \$10 billion to finance the complex process of socialist economic reforms which Cuba should implement without delay during the course of the next few months.

This would be a well-deserved reciprocal gesture towards wholehearted Cuban solidarity during these five decades, but equally a gesture of calculated altruism for which all that is needed is the political will since the money is already there.

Or are the governments of the region so naive as to not realise that if the Cuban Revolution ends the US empire would put all its weight on our countries, regardless of ideological nuances, to recolonise, with fire and blood, the continent and restore the order which Fidel and the 26th July Movement succeeded in reversing the January 1, 1959?

Atilio A. Boron

P.S.

* Published in English on the CADTM website. Translated by Michaela Bygrave.

* Dr. Atilio A. Boron is director of the Programa Latinoamericano de Educación a Distancia en Ciencias Sociales, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Visit Boron's web site at <http://www.atilioboron.com>.