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Cuban and Mexican Presidents Strengthen Solidarity in Remarkable Display

The independence of Mexico and of Cuba, got a big hearing in Mexico City on September 16. On that day in 1810, in Dolores, Mexico, Catholic priest Miguel Hidalgo called upon parishioners to join him in rebelling against Spain's viceregal government. Mexico finally gained independence in 1821. Every year, at 11 PM on September 15, and on September 16, Mexicans and their presidents pay homage to Hidalgo's iconic Cry of Dolores (*Grito de Dolores*).

This year, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, commemorating that important day, had a surprising guest. Cuba's president Miguel Díaz-Canel was at his side and they both spoke. Shared goals and strong friendship were evident. The extraordinary encounter may portend new substance and heightened commitment for efforts to free Cuba, at long last, from aggressive U.S. interference with Cuba's sovereignty.

The Cuban president later joined president López Obrador in reviewing Mexican armed forces assembled in the Zocalo, Mexico City's central plaza. No visiting foreign president had ever done so.

Excerpts of their remarks appear below. What they actually said may more readily communicate concepts, reasoning, convictions, and deep feelings than would have been the case with summarization. The object here is to enhance appreciation of the nature and strength of the two nations' friendship now and into the future.

To begin: President López Obrador observes that "[Hidalgo] who initiated independence matters more to Mexicans than Iturbide, who consummated it. The priest defended the common people while the royalist general represented the higher-ups ... [But] his

adversaries never forgave [Hidalgo's] audacity in wanting to make poor people the equals of the most favored classes."

"We Mexicans," he adds, "feel pride in this hero and others, because here, like nowhere else, the independence movement did not begin by simply reaccommodating with the power elite, or act solely through nationalist feelings, but it was the fruit of a craving for justice and freedom. Indeed, the call for liberty and justice preceded the call for political independence."

López Obrador turns to Cuba:

"Today we remember that heroic deed [of Hidalgo] and we celebrate it with the participation of the President of Cuba. He represents a people who resolved, like few others in the world, to defend with dignity their right to live free and Independent, without allowing the interference of any foreign power in their internal affairs. I have already said and I repeat: we may or may not agree with the Cuban Revolution and Cuba's government, but to have resisted 62 years without surrender is a historical feat, undoubtedly.

"I believe, therefore, that through their struggle in defense of their country's sovereignty, the people of Cuba deserve a prize for dignity. That island has to be considered as the new Numantia for its example of resistance. And I think for the same reason that the country has to be declared a patrimony of humanity. Now I only add that the government I represent respectfully calls upon the government of the United States to raise its blockade against Cuba, because no state has a right to subjugate another people, or another country. ..."

(Numantia was a hill fortress in northern Spain contested by Roman soldiers and the native Spaniards between 154 B.C. and 133 B.C. The latter did not surrender. Finally, Roman general Scipio Aemilianus and 60,000 soldiers surrounded the fortress with entrenchments. After 15 months, all 6000-8000 Iberian soldiers inside were dead of starvation.)

The Mexican president continues: "I say with complete frankness: It looks very bad that the U.S. government uses the blockade to hurt the people of Cuba with the purpose of having them be forced by necessity to confront their own government. If this perverse strategy achieves success – something that doesn't appear likely given the dignity we referred to – it would be a Pyrrhic victory, a vile and scoundrelly one. A stain like that is not washed away by all the water of the seas.

“Let President Biden, who possess much political sensitivity, take a wider view and put an end, for always, to the politics of grievances against Cuba. In the search for reconciliation, he must also help the U.S. Cuban community and put aside electoral and partisan issues ...It’s a time of brotherhood and not of confrontation. As Jose Martí pointed out: “to avoid shock, we rely upon exquisite political tact that derives from the majesty of disinterest and the rule of love.”

President Miguel Díaz-Canel speaks:

“Among all the brothers Our America gave to us, Mexico counts for Cuba as one of the dearest ones, for many reasons. The affection that unites our lands begins with amazement at its diverse and deep traces in the literature and history of America.” Díaz Canel cites Cuban authors José María Heredia and particularly José Martí. He reads Martí’s portrayal of Hidalgo.

Díaz-Canel remarks that, “Through its characteristics, the independence process in Mexico ... showed a remarkable component of social demands, on behalf of indigenous peoples especially. It differed in that way from other processes typical of the era of independence struggles. Without question, its impact on the freedom and anti-colonialist struggles of our region, particularly in Cuba, was extraordinary.”

He points out that Mexicans joined Cuba’s first War for Independence from Spain (1868-1878) that Mexico extended recognition to that leader’s insurgent government. He mentions Cubans fighting with Mexicans in their wars against Texan Anglos and U.S. invaders in 1846-1848. Díaz-Canel refers to Martí, who “joined our two nations eternally in all his work, but especially in letters to his great Mexican friend Manuel Mercado.”

On the eve of Cuba’s Second War for Independence (1895-1898), Martí communicated to Mercado his idea of “Using the independence of Cuba to stop the United States in time from extending throughout the Antilles and falling with even more force upon our American lands.”

Díaz-Canel mentions the murder in Mexico City by Cuba’s Machado dictatorship of the young Cuban Communist leader Julio Antonio Mella in 1929. He praises Mexicans’ assistance to preparations there for the Granma expedition led by Fidel Castro in 1956. And, recalls the Cuban president, “faithful to its best traditions, Mexico was the only country in Latin America that did not break relations with Cuba when we were expelled by the OAS by imperial mandate.”

Díaz-Canel emphasizes that, “Mexico’s solidarity with Cuba has awakened in our people a greater admiration and the deepest gratitude ... the decision to invite us has an

immeasurably greater value, at a time when we are suffering the onslaught of a multidimensional war, with a criminal blockade, opportunistically intensified.” Because we are “under fire in a total war ...Cuba will always remember your expressions of support, your permanent demand for the lifting of the blockade and for the annual United Nations vote to be converted into concrete deeds.”.

The Mexican-Cuban alliance has value for Cuba. Mexico’s government has a U.S. ear, if only because disruption of amicable U.S.-Mexican relations might significantly destabilize aspects of life in the United States. Additionally, Mexico does provide material aid to Cuba and has the potential for promoting support for Cuba throughout her Latin America. An analyst writing for Almayadeen.net offers perspective: “Mexico, during López Obrador’s presidency, has begun a process of winning back its regional influence... The U.S. – Cuba conflict is another relevant factor in Mexico’s position ... [Already] documented is the mutual love between the Mexican and Cuban peoples ... [Therefore,] the building of a new relation of the region with and Washington cannot exclude Havana, and on that López Obrador has been strong.”

Cuba’s friendship with Mexico hardly matches the importance of its alliance with the Soviet Bloc. Material aid from that source helped assure the revolutionary government’s survival. Soviet military might and worldwide influence discouraged U.S. excesses in regard to Cuba. But activated friendship with Mexico now may add tangible benefits for Cuba’s cause that are lacking with other solidarity efforts, for example: pro-Cuba votes in the United Nations, hit-and-miss material aid, various solidarity statements, and assistance from NGO’s.

Meanwhile reality intrudes. In front of Cuba’s Mexico City Embassy on September 16, a few anti-government activists, having arrived from Cuba, tussled with Cubans living in Mexico who support their government. The Mexican media carried critiques of Díaz-Canel’s presence in Mexico that López Obrador’s own political opposition had generated. More significantly, the entire region on September 18 missed a fragile opportunity of gaining some independence from U.S. domination. The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), a regional organization to which the United States and Canada do not belong, was holding a summit meeting in Mexico City that day, The CELAC group refused to consider a proposal put forth by President López Obrador and others that member states abandon the Organization of American States (OAS) or alter its functioning. The U.S. government is accused of using OAS as a tool for controlling the region.

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