

Cuba's Fernando González: "With Trump we can expect even more aggression"

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Fernando Gonzalez, president of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the

Peoples. Photos: Bill Hackwell

As the island goes through one of its worst economic crises, the president of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples, Fernando Gonzalez, believes that international solidarity is now “more essential than ever.”

Hurricanes, earthquakes, economic crisis and soon the return of the extreme right-wing Republican to the White House... The situation seems very worrying for Cuba and its revolution. For the president of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), Fernando Gonzalez, who foresees four years of even harsher policies against his country, “international solidarity is now more essential than ever.”

However, there is no room for despair for the island, which has always been able to reinvent itself and defy all obstacles. Interview with the former Cuban intelligence agent, one of the “Cuban Five” awarded the title of “Hero of the Republic of Cuba” after serving sixteen years in prison in the United States for infiltrating paramilitary circles planning attacks against his country.

What is the situation in Cuba after the last hurricanes that hit the island?

The situation in Cuba is very complex. We have had two hurricanes and an earthquake, which have caused considerable damage. But the government, at all levels, is trying to implement all the necessary structural measures to correct the situation. Some issues, such as power, water and telephone outages, have already advanced at a good pace in their recovery, while others, such as damage to buildings or homes, will take longer, not for lack of will, but because of the limited resources we have.

It is worth remembering that these calamities occur at a time when the Cuban economy is in an extremely complex situation. It has not had the capacity to grow in recent years, which is due in part to the very limited availability of resources. In

spite of this, the government's desire continues to be to provide solutions and not to leave anyone in difficulties.



Our freedom and dignity will never be bought.

What are the factors that explain the failures of the electrical system, apart from the impact of natural disasters?

The issue of the electrical system is very complex. Even before the cyclones, we had already experienced an episode in which the entire electrical system was down due to technical problems. Today, we can say that a big part of it has been restored, but there is still a fundamental problem: the production capacity at the national level still does not cover the total demand of the population.

In Cuba, the demand is about 3,000 megawatts per day, so if we only produce 1,700 megawatts, we will have a deficit that we will not be able to cover. For now, the only way to solve this problem is to schedule power outages. Clearly, the situation means

that at certain times of the day, the population has to suffer power cuts. And that translates into discomfort for people, irritation.

To what extent does the U.S. blockade affect the Cuban electrical system?

Our thermoelectric power plants are more than 30 years old. It is not always possible to carry out the necessary repairs, for various reasons, among which is precisely the high and constant demand for electricity. And, of course, there are all the issues related to the blockade which, for example, prevents us from accessing the spare parts or materials needed to carry out the required repairs in the power plants.

There is also the question of dependence on oil to fuel these power plants....

In fact, this is in addition to the problems I just mentioned. Our country does not always have all the fuel needed to produce this electricity. Once again, at the root of this fundamental problem is the ruthless economic war waged against us by the United States.

Because it is very difficult for Cuba to buy oil abroad, not only because of our financial limitations, but also because of the barriers that the U.S. government has erected to prevent our supply from arriving.

Often, even if you have the funds, it is very difficult to bring oil tankers to Cuba, because the companies that trade with us (from shipping companies to insurance companies) are persecuted and can be subject to sanctions by U.S. authorities simply for carrying out a common business transaction afforded most countries in the world. Very few people are willing to send fuel to Cuba. This is a direct consequence of the blockade.

What role can international solidarity with Cuba play, if not to remedy, at least to mitigate the effects of the U.S. blockade?

It is essential. Cuba is a small country, which does not have many resources, but which proposes an alternative form of society, organized in a different way that is not only around the profits of certain interest groups.

It is a society organized around the human being, and I think it offers an alternative to individualism, while everywhere else the benefits are reserved only for certain sectors in the hands of the private sector, leaving aside the vast majority of the population. And I believe that this is the origin of the war that is being waged against Cuba: the objective is to try to erase this example of another model of society that we offer.

Far be it for me to pretend that everything in Cuba is perfect, there are many things we could have done better, and also things we have done that in the long run we have realized were mistakes.

Sometimes things do not go as we intended, however, everything that is done here is aimed at serving the majority of the population. No measure is adopted in pursuit of a particular interest, or because a sector of the economy has been able to buy the vote of deputies or members of the government. Everything that is done in Cuba is done with the human being and the improvement of the living conditions of the majority of Cubans in mind.

We think above all of the collective, we try to build a society that seeks the common good and, through this common good, the individual good of the citizens.

Being in solidarity with Cuba is not only a humanitarian question, there is a political and ideological question....

It is important to defend the right to life of Cubans and through this the right to exist as an alternative society that we propose, especially in the current circumstances when the United States is waging a war against Cuba in an attempt to suffocate its

economy, in the hope that the people will withdraw their support for the revolutionary government.

Solidarity with our country, with our revolution, has always existed, but today it is even more important, and even essential in these difficult times we are going through.

Broad diplomatic support is not enough?

The moral victory obtained at the United Nations shows, once again, that Cuba is far from being alone at the international level, quite the contrary. But we know very well that this support does not mean the end of the blockade. Today's slogan is to demand with all our might that Cuba be removed from the infamous State Sponsors of Terrorism (SSOT) created by our northern neighbor. Together, Cuba and its supporters must find the formula that will allow us to reach out to the U.S. government and reverse this absurd measure.

We are in an extremely complex scenario, and we say it clearly: today more than ever we need international solidarity. We need new voices to denounce the injustice committed against Cuba and to find new ways to defend international law.

What can we expect from the United States now that Republican Donald Trump is about to return to power?

Some of their administrations have been more aggressive, others not so much, but at the end of the day, we know that there is a consensus within the political class in this country, whether they are Democrats or Republicans, on how to deal with Cuba. They have always sought, in one way or another, to stifle our economy in an attempt to get our people to withdraw their support for their government.

We do not expect much from the new U.S. presidency. Our flag is and will always be to defend our independence and sovereignty, tooth and nail, whatever it takes.

If we look at the results of Donald Trump's four years in the White House, we can imagine what awaits us: four years of even harsher policies against Cuba. He will surely try by all means to continue limiting as much as possible the little room for maneuver we have to stay afloat economically.

The appointment of Marco Rubio to the Foreign Affairs post does not bode well.

Indeed, Donald Trump's arrival will be aggravated by the fact that his likely Secretary of State is a person who has a personal vendetta to take against Cuba. For any other secretary of state, Cuba might be, for example, a footnote. But not for this person.

Therefore, we can expect the aggressiveness and efforts of the U.S. government, which have been going on for 60 years to try to suffocate the Cuban economy, to intensify in the next four years. They will pursue their unattainable dream: that the Cuban people will blame their government for the calamities and needs they suffer. We will face this new scenario with the support and help of international solidarity.

We know that we have many friends around the world, millions of people know the reality of our country and support us, which gives us strength to continue fighting. There is no room for despair. Cuba reinvents itself every day, with its own effort and with the precious company of activists from all over the world. The Trump administration is about to arrive, and then it will move on. The Cuban revolution will always be there.

Source: [Resumen Latinoamericano - Buenos Aires](#)



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