

Free from US LatAm Learns to Get Free from Own Blindness, Brazil's Lula Tells Chavez

Contributed by Francesco Neves
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Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is back in Brazil after a trip to Venezuela where he met his counterpart Hugo Chavez to sign a series of agreements. On Friday, Brazil and Venezuela ratified in El Tigre about 15 public and private cooperation accords. The areas involved: energy, oil, food, roads and urbanization of slums.

President Lula called these actions a complement to the work done by Latin American liberators, like Simon Bolivar, José de San Martin and Antonio José de Sucre.

Next to Chavez, Lula also celebrated the fact that the Brazilian senate's foreign relations committee has voted in favor of admitting Venezuela into the South American economic club Mercosur. For a time mainly after Chavez statement that the Brazilian legislative was being manipulated by the US it was in doubt the senators would ever approve the Venezuelan membership.

Lula's own effort plus the lobby by businessmen ended changing the winds direction in the Upper House. For Lula, the Senate's action was "a gratifying gesture. It was a rupture with prejudice."

And he added: What Brazil is doing today, Brazil could have done 20 years ago, 15 years ago, 10 years ago. The truth of the matter is that Brazil, a country with an extraordinary economy, with an exceptional industrial potential, also couldn't easily free itself from a privileged look towards Europe and the United States. In other words, when we got to the government we made a decision of government: First, let's take a look at what is closer to us."

The Brazilian leader talked to the Venezuelan president about the special times Brazil and Venezuela are experiencing: "Chavez, I think the moment we are living, in South America, is an extremely important moment for the consolidation of ideas of those who came before us and conceived the liberation of our countries, first from the Spanish and the Portuguese, and then from the English, from the Americans.

"And, I would say, now we are getting to another phase, which is achieving independence from our own blindness, since we passed a long time without seeing ourselves, without discovering the potential of political, cultural, commercial connections between us.

"I believe that what matters is the beginning, in other words, I was telling comrade Chavez, that oil is a fantastic thing. Because it is very easy money and often whoever has much money is like someone who went to play in a casino, the person wants to win more and more and, suddenly, he loses everything.

"History is full of examples that oil, by itself does not solve the problems of a country. In other words, a country, will have much more peace when it is industrialized and when it has food security. Every country has to produce its own corn, its soy, its bean, its tomato, its onion, raise its cattle, produce its meat and industrialize that.

"And I get very happy, Chavez, because I realize that this is happening in a very fast way here, in Venezuela. I am 64, I have another year in office. In ten years whoever is alive will see a new Venezuela, putting together the large oil production, the large industrialization and the large food production. A country needs all of this to build itself and to become definitively independent."

The Venezuelan leader, on the other hand, talked about how sure he feels that his country will be now approved by the full Brazilian senate. "This is not a whim. It is a destiny. There is a sound integration and a true unity. We're talking about a big step. In the end, Lula, you know that Venezuela is as yours as Brazil is."

Chavez also compared Lula to Jesus Christ: "President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva came as Christ, announcing the good news. It is beneficial to all to create a large market for South America. Mercosur is going to become a new hub of economic power."

Lula seemed all excited about his visit to the soy field in the El Tiger region. He emphasized that Brazil is not "selling soy" but transferring technology. Lula explained that he got technical information on how to best use the planted area. According to the Embrapa (Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation) Venezuela will be able to double its soy production by adding limestone to its soil.