

The Republican candidate (Part One)

These reflections are self-explanatory.

In that already famous Super Tuesday, a day of the week when a number of States of the Union were selecting the candidate of their choice for the presidency of the United States from among a group of contenders, one of the likely candidates to replace George W. Bush was John McCain. Due to of his pre-packaged hero image, and his alliance with strong contenders such as Rudy Giuliani, the former governor of the state of New York, other candidates had already gladly endorsed him. The intense propaganda of social, economic and political factors having great significance in his country, and his personal style had turned him into the frontrunner. Only the extreme Republican right represented by Mitt Romney and Mike Huckabee, in disagreement with some insignificant McCain concessions, was still offering some resistance on February 5th. Subsequently, Romney would also withdraw in favor of McCain. Huckabee is still in the contest.

On the other hand, the struggle for the Democratic Party candidate is much tougher. Even though we are dealing, as usual, with an active part of the enfranchised population that tends to be a minority, we are already hearing all kinds of opinions and speculations about the consequences of the final outcome of the electoral battle for the country and the world, if mankind escapes the warmongering adventures of Bush.

It is not up to me to talk about the history of a candidate for the Presidency of the United States. I have never done so, and perhaps I would never have. Why should I be doing it at this time?

McCain has said that some of his comrades were tortured by Cuban agents in Vietnam. His advocates and publicity experts tend to emphasize that McCain himself suffered such torture at the hands of the Cubans.

I hope that the U.S. people will understand that I consider it my obligation to enter into a detailed analysis of this Republican candidate and to respond to him. I shall do so on the basis of ethical considerations.

The McCain file shows that he was a prisoner of war in Vietnam from October 26, 1967.

As he tells it himself, he was 31 years old at the time and flying his 23rd bombing mission. His plane, an A-4E Skyhawk was shot down over Hanoi by an anti-aircraft missile. Because of the hit, he lost control and ejected over Truc Bach Lake, in the middle of the city, suffering fractures in both arms and one knee. A patriotic crowd, seeing an aggressor come down, gave him a hostile reception. McCain himself says he was relieved at that moment to see the arrival of an army squad.

The bombing of Vietnam, begun in 1965, shocked international opinion, very sensitized to air attacks by the superpower against a small third world country which had been turned into a French colony, thousands of miles away from distant Europe. The Vietnamese people fought against Japanese occupation forces during World War II and, when that war ended, France once again took control. Ho Chi Minh, the modest leader who was much loved by all, and Nguyen Giap, his military commander, were internationally admired figures. The famous French Foreign Legion had been defeated. In trying to avoid that, the aggressor powers were at the point of using a nuclear weapon at Diên Biên Phu.

The noble "anamitas", as José Martí affectionately called them, holders of millenary culture and values were portrayed, to U.S. public opinion, as a barbarian people unworthy of existence. In terms of

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suspense and commercial advertising, nobody can compete with the American specialists. The specialty was used unrestrictedly in the case of the POWs, and particularly in the case of McCain.

Going along with that, McCain later said that the fact that his father was an Admiral and commanded the U.S. forces in the Pacific led the Vietnamese Resistance to offer him early liberation if he would admit that he had committed war crimes; he refused, arguing that the Military Code provides that prisoners be liberated in the order they were captured, and that meant five years of prison, beatings and torture in a prison area the Americans called the "Hanoi Hilton."

The final pull out from Vietnam was disastrous. An army which was half a million strong, trained and armed to the teeth, could not hold back the thrust of the Vietnamese patriots. Saigon, the colonial capital, today called Ho Chi Minh City, was embarrassingly abandoned by the occupation forces and their accomplices, some of them holding to helicopters. The United States lost more than 50 thousand of their precious sons and daughters, not counting those that were wounded. They had spent 500 billion dollars in that war without taxes, always distasteful in their own right. Nixon unilaterally revoked the commitments of Bretton Woods setting the foundations of today's financial crisis. Their only achievement was a Republican Presidential candidate 41 years later.

McCain, one of the many U.S. pilots shot down and wounded in the declared, or undeclared, wars of their country, was decorated with the Silver Star, Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star Medal and the Purple Heart.

A TV movie based on his memoirs of the experiences as a POW was broadcast on Memorial Day of 2005 and he became famous for videos and speeches on the subject.

The worst statement he made regarding our country was that Cuban interrogators had been regularly torturing American prisoners.

As a reaction to McCain's incredible words, I became interested in the matter. I wanted to know where such a strange legend had come from. I asked that someone find information on the attribution. I was informed that there was a highly promoted book which was the basis for the movie. This was written by McCain and Mark Salter, his Senate administrative advisor, who continues to work and write with him. I asked for it to be translated. This was done, as on other occasions, very quickly by qualified staff. The title of the book: Faith of My Fathers, 349 pages, published in 1999.

His accusation against internationalist Cuban revolutionaries --using the nickname Fidel to identify one of them who was capable of "torturing a prisoner to death"-- is totally lacking in any ethics.

Allow me to remind you, Mr. McCain: The commandments of your religion forbid you from lying. Your years in prison and the wounds you received as a result of your attacks on Hanoi do not excuse you from the moral duty of truth.

Some facts must be brought to your attention. In Cuba, we had a rebellion against a despot who was put into power by the United States on March 10, 1952, imposed on the Cuban people, when you were just about to turn 16 years old, and the Republican government of a celebrated soldier, Dwight D. Eisenhower --who indeed was the first one to speak of the industrial-military complex-- immediately recognized and supported that government. I was a bit older than you; I would have my 26 birthday that August, the same month when you were born. Eisenhower had not yet completed his presidential term that had begun in the 1950's, some years after he became famous for the allied landing in the north of France, with the support of 10 thousand planes and the most powerful naval force known up to that time.

It was a war, formally declared by the powers fighting Hitler. The Nazis had launched a pre-emptive attack, without warning and without any prior declaration of war. A new style of producing great slaughters was imposed on mankind.

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In 1945, two bombs of roughly 20 kilotons each were used against the civilian populations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I once visited the first of those cities.

In the 1950's, the government of the United States came to build such nuclear attack weapons. One of them, the MR17, came to weigh 19.05 tons and measured 7.49 meters; it would be carried in their bombers and would unleash an explosion of 20 megatons, equivalent to a thousand bombs like the one that was dropped over the first of those two cities on August 6, 1945. It is a fact that would infuriate Einstein who, in the midst of his contradictions, would often express regret about the weapon that, without meaning to, he helped to manufacture, with his scientific theories and discoveries.

When the Revolution triumphs in Cuba on January 1st, 1959, almost 15 years after the explosion of the first nuclear weapons, and we proclaim an Agrarian Reform Act based on the principle of national sovereignty, consecrated by the blood of millions of combatants who died in that war, the United States response was a program of illegal deeds and terrorist attacks against the Cuban people, signed by the President of the United States himself, Dwight D. Eisenhower.

The attack on the Bay of Pigs followed the exact instructions of the President of the United States and the invaders were escorted by U.S. naval units, including an aircraft carrier. The first air assault with U.S. B-26 planes flying out of secret bases was a pre-emptive attack using Cuban markings on the planes so that world opinion would see this as a revolt by our national air force.

You accuse Cuban revolutionaries of being torturers. I seriously urge you to find a single one of the more than a thousand prisoners captured during the Bay of Pigs fighting who had been tortured. I was there, not in some protected position at a distant general command post. I personally captured a number of prisoners with the help of some assistants; I walked in front of armed squads who were still lying under cover of the forest's vegetation, paralyzed by the presence of the Chief of the Revolution. I'm sorry that I have to mention this because it might appear to be boasting, and that is something I honestly detest.

The prisoners were citizens born in Cuba organized by a powerful foreign power to fight against their own people.

You have admitted that you are in favor of the death penalty for very serious crimes. What would have you done if faced by such acts? How many would you have sentenced for that treason? In Cuba, we tried several of the invaders who, under Batista's orders, had previously committed horrendous crimes against Cuban revolutionaries.

I visited the mass of Bay of Pigs prisoners, --that is how you call the Girón Beach invasion-- on more than one occasion, and I talked with them. I like to find out man's motives. They showed surprise and expressed their acknowledgement of the personal respect with which they were treated.

You should know that while we were negotiating their liberation in exchange for compensation by food and medicines for children, the U.S. government was organizing plans to assassinate me. There is a record of this in what was written by people taking part in the negotiation process.

I shall not go into detail about the long list of hundreds of assassination attempts on me. None of this is made up. It has been stated in official documents circulated by the U.S. government.

What ethics underlie such deeds, vehemently defended by you as a matter of principles?

I shall attempt to delve deeper into those matters.

Fidel Castro Ruz

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