

Tribute to Carlos Quijano: Colleague and mentor in the World Bank and former President of ASCE. Delivered at the 34th Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy

It was not difficult to track down Carlos in the World Bank when he was not in his office. You just followed the trail of cigar smell - and occasionally ash - left by his Cohibas. In those distant days, one could actually smoke inside the World Bank headquarters.

When I joined that institution in 1987, Carlos was already a respected veteran of twenty years. He looked old for his age; but here is the catch - his looks did not change in the next thirty years. At the time, Carlos was the main advisor for the operations of the Bank in Latin America. He was entrusted with sensitive tasks including all the co-financing of sovereign donors with the Bank.

Before that Carlos had been the Director of the Resident office of the Bank in Colombia. His job in Bogotá was so stellar that on the last day of his tenure he was offered Colombian nationality. And not only that, but President Lopez Michelsen also handed over the passport to Carlos himself in a ceremony. A few years later, in 1977, when Spain graduated as borrower of the World Bank, meaning that it had achieved the standard of a developed country, Carlos was designated to lead the World Bank mission to Madrid. The signing ceremony was presided by King Juan Carlos. Before retirement, the World Bank asked Carlos to do research on the contribution of multilateral banks to world development. He devoted the last two years to that task at Oxford University.

I learned a lot from Carlos about life in Havana before 1959; about the erratic policies of the *Castristas* during the first year in which Carlos worked at the Ministry of Finance. When Felipe Pazos resigned to the Presidency of the National Bank and left Cuba, so did Carlos.

It was through Carlos that I first attended in 2001 the annual conference of ASCE. Many more conferences followed. In these, I had the opportunity to get to know the bright minds of the old guard: Carmelo Mesa-Lago (whom I call jokingly "*tio*" and he responds "*hola sobrino*"), Jorge Sanguinetti and Oscar Echevarria. The not so old-guard; my friends Luis Locay, Sylvia Pedraza, Jorge Perez Lopez (the soul of ASCE), his cousin Lorenzo Perez, and Roger Betancourt. Others I had known for years in Washington DC: Joaquin Pujol, Armando Linde, and Ernesto Hernandez-Catá. Ernesto was a close friend. Rest in peace, dear Ernesto.

Over the last twenty years, I have lived in Key Biscayne near the Quijanos. We met frequently for coffee or lunch. Maritza's Fabadas are unparalleled. After lunch, Maritza would usher us to the sheltered terrace to have Cuban coffee, smoke Cohibas, and drink aged Rum or good Galician Orujo. Over the table, Carlos - an avid reader - always had the books he was currently reading. On the last visit, I spotted Timothy Snider's *On Tyranny*. Just like many of us, Carlos was terrified that the US would take the path of a banana republic.

Carlos was a deep thinker; always up-to date. His judgement on political and economic developments was second to none. He was a good storyteller too; full of witty anecdotes. Here is one: once in Washington, we went for dinner to a Spanish Restaurant (Taberna del Alabardero). The owner - a Spanish priest - had the bishop as guest for dinner. After greeting the owner, Carlos whispered to me: *"mi padre decía: sigue a los curas, son los que mejor comen."*

In late 2023, I visited our common friend Enrique Iglesias in Madrid, former president of the Inter-American Development Bank. Enrique asked me to film a video with my iPhone with a message for Carlos. On arriving in Miami, I phoned Carlos, excited to meet him and watch the video. Maritza replied and told me that Carlos had just left us.

I have no doubt that the reservoir of knowledge stored in the Proceedings of ASCE conferences will one day be determinant to set the road map for Cuba's transition from tyranny to democracy, from central planning to a market economy. I am sad that it is taking so long. Sad that many brilliant Cubans, like Quijano, Montaner, Hernandez-Catá, Roger Betancourt and many others have not been given the chance to make a contribution to building a new Cuba. Rest in peace to them all.

I spent Christmas dinner in 2022 with Maritza and Carlos. When we moved to the terrace to smoke Cohibas, I asked Carlos what his doctor said about smoking at 92 two Cuban Cigars per day. He countered *"On that I follow what Compay Segundo answered to the same question: do not give up the pleasures of life, but always in moderation."*

Larger than life, Carlos, I miss you.

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