Why does the U.S. shun Cuba, but not Israel?

06/11/2014



“Between confusion and disaster / Know there is a solution / It’s called love,” sang Arik Einstein.

And we saw it proved once again with the headlines: “The UN voted in favor of lifting the embargo on Cuba; Opposed: United States and Israel.” Twenty-three years in a row the United Nations has voted to lift the American embargo on Cuba, which the U.S. imposed more than 50 years ago. The decision, which does not bind the U.S. (Why? Because!) was passed by a vote of 188 in favor, and only the anti-communist pair of lovebirds, the U.S. and Israel, voted against.

How did it happen that from the Cold War world’s division into blocs, from years of ideological struggles filled with passion and flowing with blood, of the rise and fall of regimes, the only ones left standing against Cuba - which today is nothing more than a symbol - are the U.S. and Israel, alone in the struggle, against the entire world?

It is tempting to interpret Israel’s pathetic support for the superpower on which its life depends as an easy opportunity to thank it, especially in light of the crisis in relations between the two countries at the moment.

And of course, it is tempting to mock the Americans for what looks like their inability to overcome the fact that Cuba has not surrendered to it and not to its violent interference in the island nation’s internal affairs in the course of its war against the spread of communism in Latin America.

But it is hard to ignore the symbolic value of this historic moment. The UN serves as an arena in which the U.S. acts toward Cuba as it acts toward Israel: In opposition to the rest of the world, and against the direction of historic traffic.

America is ignoring world opinion and insists on continuing the embargo on Cuba, when it is clear to everyone, including the Americans themselves, that after the fall of the communist bloc and in light of the relations between the U.S. and China and Vietnam, it is cruel and illogical.

In the same UN halls, it insists on preventing the world from placing an embargo on Israel or (at the very least, from recognizing a Palestinian state), when it is clear to everyone, even - again - to the Americans themselves, that the UN is dealing with a member that's testing boundaries.

The symbolic meeting of the three nations in the UN seems to reflect the remnants of the Cold War, which the U.S. is still carrying on and cannot manage to get rid of.

This superpower's behavior in these two areas in the world is, to a certain extent, a sort of mirror image: The unconditional hatred for Cuba blinds it to the damage it causes its citizens, and its unconditional love for Israel blinds it to the damage it is causing its residents.

Noteworthy is that in both cases, the U.S. has formulated its anachronistic policies while facing a strong and influential internal lobby, whose loyalty does not belong to just America: the Jewish lobby and the lobby of the Cuban exiles.

Even without ascribing omnipotence to the Jewish lobby, it is clear that at least as far as removing the so-called defense of Israel is concerned, it is not worth messing with it. At the same time, the hundreds of thousands of Cuban exiles in Florida (a state blessed with electoral votes and divided politically, so sometimes the Cubans' votes are decisive), the Castro-regime opponents who are pressing to maintain the embargo represent a political force that cannot be ignored.

We must say "enough" to both these groups. We must remind them that they are Americans. For those pretending to be more Cuban than the Cubans and more Israeli than the Israelis, they must stop trying to solve their identity crises through American foreign policy.

They must understand that until they ease up, the world will not evolve to its next historical phase, not in Cuba and not in Israel.