

## **RUSSIA'S DEFEAT WITH A TASTE OF VICTORY**

**Rosendo Fraga**

**Director of CARI's Foreign Relations and Armed Forces Committee**

On March 24, the United Nations Assembly passed a humanitarian resolution that demanded that Russia immediately cease hostilities in Ukraine. The document, endorsed by 90 countries, including Ukraine, defeated the South African proposal, which was not voted on and did not mention Russia.

The approved resolution obtained 140 votes in favor, 5 against and 38 abstentions. It had been promoted by France and Mexico, which first tried to present it to the Security Council, without obtaining the necessary consensus.

NATO and European Union countries, which are largely the same, led the positive vote, as did most Latin American countries and US allies in the Indo-Pacific.

Two weeks later, on April 7, the motion was voted to suspend Russia as a member of the UN Human Rights Council, as punishment for the human rights violations in the Ukrainian city of Bucha. Of the 193 members of the Assembly, 93 voted in favor of the suspension, 24 voted against it, 51 abstained and 25 were not present at the time of voting.

In other words, in two weeks, and despite the dramatic images of civilians killed in the streets of the aforementioned city, the votes in favor of the Ukrainian position fell from 140 to 93.

Among those who no longer voted against the Russian attack are the countries that were absent, including Afghanistan, Djibouti, Lebanon, Mauritania, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands and Zambia.

Then, those who abstained were Belize, Bhutan, Brazil, Cape Verde, Cambodia, Egypt, Gambia, Ghana, Guyana, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lesotho, Malaysia, Maldives, Mexico, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Qatar, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal,

Singapore, South Sudan, Suriname, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Vanuatu, and Yemen.

There was only one case that had voted in favor and now voted against, which is Gabon.

Ukraine's loss of support did not see any defections in Europe, North America and Washington's allies in the Indo-Pacific. These are nations that are articulated around NATO, of which they are either members or allies. The change in positions occurred in key countries in Asia and Africa. Such is the case of Egypt, a regional power in the north of the continent, and Nigeria, the most populated country and the largest oil exporter that is dominant in Sub-Saharan Africa. In total, 16 African countries changed their position to the detriment of Ukraine, almost a third of the continent's total.

In the Arab world, Saudi Arabia, the most important of the Gulf monarchies, abandoned its position favorable to the Ukrainian cause, as did the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman and Kuwait. In the rest of this area, two governments close to Washington dropped their stance in favor of Ukraine: Iraq and Jordan.

Indonesia, the third most populated country in Asia and at the same time the most populated Muslim country in the world, also moved away from Ukraine's position.

Except for the United States and Canada, there were substantial changes on the American continent. Brazil and Mexico, the two most important countries in Latin America by population and GDP, which two weeks ago had voted in favor of Ukraine, now abstained in the vote on Russia's exclusion from the UN Human Rights Council. Belize, Guyana, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago followed suit.

As for the votes *against*, which on March 24 had been only Belarus, North Korea, Eritrea, Russia and Syria, these were repeated again on April 7, but Algeria, Bolivia, Burundi, the Central African Republic, China (which abstained in the previous vote), Congo, Cuba, Ethiopia, Gabon, Iran, Kazakhstan,

Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Mali, Nicaragua, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Zimbabwe joined too.

The countries that repeated their abstention in both votes are Angola, Botswana, Brunei, El Salvador, Eswatini, Guinea Bissau, India, Madagascar, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, Pakistan, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Togo, Uganda and Tanzania.

It should be noted that none of the Shanghai Group, which brings together the nuclear powers of Asia (Russia, China, India and Pakistan) plus the countries of Central Asia and which will soon incorporate Iran, voted in favor of Ukraine, not only in these two votes, but also in the previous three in the international sphere: the UN Assembly held in March, the one that took place within the UN Human Rights Council, and the one that took place in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in which Russia's position was defeated.

In the case of the BRICS group, which brings together the emerging powers (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), the former, which had up to now adopted an ambiguous position, in this latest vote did so against Ukraine, as it had already done in the voting that took place in the Organization of American States (OAS).

In conclusion, the conflict between Russia and NATO over Ukraine, in the latest voting by the United Nations regarding the exclusion of Russia from the Human Rights Council, shows that the conflict has a dimension between the West and the East that has grown throughout the war, and that Russia's human rights violations have not had an impact.