

---

## The foundations of our patriotism

03/12/2017



At the end of the 19th century, an authentic social revolution that did not base its dreams of redemption on human beings, a vantage point that sees beyond the limits of race and nation, was unimaginable. Greek democracy excluded slaves and women and – without dwelling on examples from other eras – the ideologues of the bourgeois revolution also disregarded colonized peoples. But neither these, nor the workers and peasants of the “mother country,” could emancipate themselves without a humanist concept that embraced all, including the exploiters and the colonizers. When Napoleon Bonaparte accepted, before the belligerence of insurgents, the abolition of slavery in the colony of Saint-Domingue, and in it alone, Toussaint Louverture, an illiterate former slave, with political astuteness and oblivious to any pragmatic and “realistic” position, protested:

“It is not a circumstantial freedom conceded to ourselves alone that we want. It is the absolute adoption of the principle that any man born red, black, or white cannot be the property of his peer. We are free today because we are the stronger party. The Consul maintains slavery in Martinique and Bourbon; we will thus be slaves when he is the strongest.”

In 1871, José Martí, who was barely 18 years old, denounced the blindness of the heirs of the Enlightenment, who defended in Spain the same rights they denied in their colonies:

“(…) even men who dream of the universal federation, of the free atom within the free molecule, of respect for the independence of others as the basis of their own strength and independence, anathematized the request for the rights they demand, sanctioned the oppression of the independence they preach, and sanctified as the representatives of peace and morals the war of extermination and the oblivion of the heart (...) Just as yesterday, today they request the broadest freedom for themselves, and still today they applaud the unconditional war to stifle the petition for freedom of others.”

In 1895, Martí himself bequeathed a basic concept for Cuban revolutionaries: “Homeland is humanity, it is that portion of humanity that we see more closely, and in which we were to be born.” The independence of Cuba

guaranteed the physical and moral space for a republic of justice and solidarity, with the poor of the Earth, although Martí, like Bolívar, also dreamed of a greater Homeland, that would integrate all the peoples inhabiting the lands that extend from the Rio Grande to Patagonia.

No other Latin American Marxist was more deeply inspired by Martí than Fidel Castro. Martí and Fidel were the only leaders, in the short and intense history of Cuba, who achieved the necessary unity of revolutionary forces; a unity far removed from conciliatory pacts, capable of dismantling the reigning acceptance of domination – which proclaimed the incapacity of Cubans, the inferiority of the Black man and of women, and the inevitability of dependence. They built a consensus of emancipation, with virtuous men and women who outdid themselves. Fidel, like Martí, had faith in victory, in his people, in the reasons for the struggle, in the possibility of what seemed impossible. He brought together both emancipatory traditions, that of the colonial and the neocolonial world – one of whose leading figures was our own Martí – and that of those exploited by capital, that of Marxist thought and the October Revolution, whose centennial we have just commemorated.

The Cuban Revolution of 1959 could not conceive of itself as anything other than part of the rebellion of the colonized and the exploited of the world, as a step in the long struggle for the emancipation of all human beings. It is true that revolutions are not exported, they are born of unique, specific conditions, but the concept of solidarity, allied with that of justice, is basic in socialism, and cannot be subject to any limit, whether at home, in the neighborhood, or in the country.

Fidel's Cuba practiced the solidarity of brothers and sisters, without conditions or geopolitical calculations, and did not stop before interests that contravened its principles; this was the case in Asia, in Africa, in Latin America. We Cubans massively donated blood to Vietnam, we gave up a pound of our sugar quota for Allende's Chile, we fought alongside those who fought for their peoples in other lands of the world, and many fell on the way; we advanced, side by side, along with the Sandinistas and the victorious Bolivarians, in the building of a new country. We built schools, hospitals, airports, taught literacy, assisted poor communities in sports and culture, saved or cured hundreds of thousands of people who lacked medical care. Internationalism was an inviolable principle that was practiced with a clear sense of the historic moment.

Fidel's Cuba did not stop before ideological considerations, or before opprobrious regimes that conspired to overthrow it, and sent doctors, for example, to Somoza's Nicaragua when the 1972 earthquake devastated the capital of that country. It created a Contingent that bears the name of a New York internationalist from our first war of independence, to help the people of the United States after Hurricane Katrina. The only ideology it wielded was not articulated in words: it was in the act, in the selflessness, in its dedication. Two hundred and fifty-six Cuban health workers cared for Ebola patients during the worst epidemic of that lethal virus recorded in West Africa and in the world. There they met African doctors, from affected countries and from other nations of the continent, who had studied in Cuba, some even from high school and pre-university levels, like thousands of other young Arabs and Latin Americans. When Hurricane Mitch devastated the Central American Caribbean in 1998 – another ideological hurricane had paralyzed the international left, after the collapse of the "socialist camp" – Fidel re-launched internationalism and, with it, the certainty that another, better world is possible, if there is the political will. Each medical brigade that traveled to a country in a disaster, or that had requested our help, was bid farewell personally by him, insisting on respect for the traditions, beliefs, and political creeds of the patients that they would care for.

Fidel actually reactivated the solidary vocation of any authentic revolution after a dark and luminous decade of resistance, that of the nineties – foundational solidarity, backed by crisis management that always avoided harming the poorest, and that survived amid blackouts and shortages, in actions as simple and significant as the so-called "botella" (organized car sharing) in the streets of the city – and expanded it outward, with the Comprehensive Health Plan in Central America and Haiti (later Venezuela would be incorporated) and at home, with the Battle of Ideas, which aimed to rescue young people from less-favored segments of the population. Both actions of solidarity would always have an impact on the interior of the country: each health worker who saved lives in precarious conditions, in marginal or very remote areas, and every social worker who reoriented his fellow men and women on the bumpy and beautiful path to self-improvement, could (providing he/she had such a vocation) "recycle" their revolutionary spirit.

In this effort, Fidel found an equal: Hugo Chávez. Together they traveled through every plain, every river, every mountain, every urban neighborhood of our America, every Latin American heart. Together they exclaimed: let there be unity in solidarity!

Fidel's concept of Revolution (which is its moral code) acquires meaning in the context of his life and work. If

Homeland is Humanity, Socialism is justice, it is revolutionary humanism. None of the aspects or ideas set forth in this concept can be understood if disassociated from his guiding principle: the struggle against injustice, wherever it occurs, and against capitalism, against imperialism, which require it. Who says that Fidel is no longer alive? His concept of Revolution goes beyond the concept, that is, the words that form it; and interacts with history, with what was and what will be; because without justice there is no Homeland; without solidarity – domestic and abroad – there is no Homeland; without the conquests we achieved, and without those we intend to achieve, there is no Homeland.

---