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**Retamar's Heart Still Beating**

By: Yuris Nórido / CubaSi  
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Roberto Fernández Retamar would have been 90 years old last Tuesday. He had a verse that somehow defines him: With the same hands that caress you I'm building a school.

He was a poet and a public servant, two conditions that could be, at times, hard to put together, but which he knew how to sustain with his great ethics.

He sang to love — and not essentially the leisurely and self-indulgent love of some romanticisms, but, above all, of the others kind of loves: the overwhelming, the difficult, the one that builds itself little by little through sheer effort and inevitable stumbling—; and he also sung to the man who loves his homeland without expecting praises.

A poem is a question, a doubt, a reverie ... it seems that a poem is not useful for the daily struggle, but there are many verses of Retamar that were used to sustain, to give meaning to the daily efforts.

It's the greatest tribute a poet can get: that his voice be the voice of thousands, a shared word.

He left for us one and many poems and we immediately noticed that they were ours: they spoke of us, of our dreams and of the blows of life and of the small joys that color this journey.

Poetry will always be useful. But that conviction was not enough for him: he jumped in the rumbling car of a Revolution. Imperfect, like love itself, he understood that Revolution, to which he gave his best feelings.

He did not idealize it, he lived it with his feet firmly on the ground, but dreaming of the tomorrow to come.

That is also the task of poets: to foresee.

He did not live on literature; he lived for literature.

His essays shed light on unique sides of heroes, artists, times, places. His prose was also elegant, inspiring, revealing.

He excelled on his books, in the classrooms, in the meetings, in the hugs ...

He loved standing by the sea and breathing clean air. Having been, he once said, is the greatest gift: A day like every day of this life / I don't ask for anything better. I don't want anything better / Until the day death comes.

**Translated by Amilkal Labañino / CubaSí Translation Staff**

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