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Thirty years ago, the São Paulo Forum gave the left heart

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Thirty years ago, on the initiative of Fidel Castro, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and the Brazilian Workers' Party, in an adverse context for the left around the world, when many believed that socialism was a dead-end and neoliberalism was advancing, the Encounter of Latin America and the Caribbean Political Parties and Movements, renamed the São Paulo Forum a year later, was held in São Paulo, July 2-4, 1990.

Comandante en Jefe was advocating, wherever and whenever he could, the creation of a bloc to fight, not surrender despite the great difficulties, as he did at the 1993 session in Havana, when he spoke to leaders of the left, the surviving progressive, popular, revolutionary movements of that time, and called for unity in Latin America and the Caribbean.

At the Forum held in Caracas in 2012, Hugo Chávez stated, paraphrasing Simón Bolívar, "Let us place, without fear, the fundamental stone of South American, Latin American, Caribbean and world liberation." Given the advance of progressive forces in the region, he stressed the need to move on to a new stage of concrete action, in defense of the sovereignty of the peoples.

Then the winds changed, and the neoliberal restoration regained force, testing the São Paulo Forum's resistance. It was a battle that could not be lost, with Venezuela as the decisive front.

During the 24th session, in 2018, President Nicolás Maduro emphasized the role of Fidel, and described the Forum as "a wonderful idea founded by that visionary genius of humanity;" meanwhile, a year later, in Caracas, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel stated, "When it seems once again that the right... is advancing uncontrollably on the continent... Venezuela is today the principal trench in the anti-imperialist struggle."

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Forum this year, Executive Secretary Monica Valente spoke with Granma, saying, "It was within the framework of the debates, reflections, exchange of experiences and ideas of the São Paulo Forum that the political conditions were created for the political, economic and social transformations that took place in Latin America and the Caribbean in the recent period."

And on the importance of continuing the gatherings, she said: "The ideas and strategic lines of the São Paulo Forum remain valid and currently relevant, essential to the fight against poverty and hunger, especially in the post-pandemic world. The Forum continues to be a fundamental instrument for the consolidation of unity of the popular, progressive and left-wing parties in Latin America and the Caribbean."

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