Tribute in Spain to Cuban culture and foundation of Havana

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Cuba's embassy in Spain was the scene Thursday of an emotional gala in honor of Culture Day on the island and 500 years of the foundation of Havana.

The Cuban National Culture Day evokes every October 20 the composition of the national anthem, the work of the patriot Pedro Figueredo, just 10 days after the beginning of the independence struggle of 1868.

'Our anthem is a direct expression of our Cubanness, and in its letter it contains many of our essences,' said Cuban ambassador in Spain, Gustavo Machín, before a large audience gathered in the legation of the largest of the Antilles in Madrid.

'Not only the verses, which urge to combat, to fight for independence, and express the defining metaphor: To die for the country is to live, which is essentially in line with what is considered Cubanness today', Machín said of the fervent notes of that song.

The diplomat said that culture in his country grows fresh in these times, fertilized by these roots, against wind and tide.

'One can understand, then, that without freedom and independence there would be no Cuban culture, and without Cuban culture, we would lose independence or have no reason to fight for it,' he emphasized.

Regarding the capital of the Caribbean nation, that next November 16 will be half a millennium

old, he recalled that it was one of the first seven villages founded by the Spanish Crown on the island.

The ambassador took advantage of the evening to share with those present the victory achieved the eve at the United Nations, where for the twenty-eighth time the international community overwhelmingly condemned the US blockade imposed on his country.

The gala was enlivened by Cuban troubadour Ismael de la Torre and his compatriots Andres Puig, a well-known painter and sculptor who donated several works to the Caribbean nation, and singer Arahi Martinez, former member of the Anacaona female orchestra.

The celebration was attended by several ambassadors and representatives of the diplomatic corps accredited in this country, members of Cuban resident associations and the solidarity movement with the island.

On behalf of the Spanish Government, Juan Pablo de Laiglesia, Secretary of State for International Cooperation and for Latin America and the Caribbean participated.