

OPINION: Saving Pride

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The struggle against cultural colonialism finds an obstacle that sometimes becomes insurmountable: colonized nations ignore that they are colonized. National and personal self-esteem has vanished from them, irreversibly, everything they say or do in the metropolis (which does not present itself as such), is superior. In Cuba, before 1959, colonized politicians believed that anything was possible except to go against the interests of the United States. That is why, in the 1960s, they traveled to Miami with the tranquility of vacationers, almost without luggage: The Revolution could not last long. But the Cubans defeated imperialism at Bay of Pigs and thirteen U.S. presidents. We do feel the pride of being the first socialist revolution in the Western Hemisphere and the first free territory of America.

Revolutions in the neo-colonized South restore the confidence of the peoples: you can do it. We can do it. Due to my age, I did not experience it in Cuba, but I did experience it in Venezuela: the old lady who has just learned to read and write, and with total certainty says:

"I'm going to continue studying until I graduate as a lawyer." The Revolution turned this small archipelago into a power: in the arts, in biotechnology, health, and sports. Triumphs in sports, because of their popular character and their ability to unite a nation and generate trust, have been mainstays of national pride. A pride of a poor and supportive nation, open to all cultures.

That is why imperialism insisted, with all its media power and its money, on destroying the already entrenched perception (which corresponded to the facts) that we were almost invincible in baseball. When the amateur sports system collapsed, the market politicized the sport: they could not beat us and they took our winning players, many of the best. Then they spread lies, seeds of mistrust, the belief in the superiority of professionalism, especially that of the United States. That is also the role of the market: the individual race to succeed (that is, to get, at all costs, the combined glory of success and material wealth) as *"we only live once,"* makes us forget who we are, where we come from, and also who the supposed or real benefactors are. The dispute between imperialism and the insurrectionary Homeland is presented as an issue for politicians, which does not concern us.

In the bodega of my neighborhood a lady commented that on a recent trip to the United States, where a daughter or son lives, I don't know, she underwent an urgent surgery. The surgery, due to its complexity, or the sophisticated medical equipment and medicines they required, would not have been possible in Cuba. Then she concluded: I thank the United States for saving my life. She did not mention the American doctor who saved her – which would have been understandable – but the country that prevents hers from having the necessary equipment and medicines to save other lives like hers. However, in northern Italy, during the climax of the Covid-19 pandemic, those sophisticated equipment that Cuban doctors and nurses had to learn their know-how hastily, were not enough, nor the abundance of medicines, the brigade that crossed the Atlantic from a poor and blockaded country, saved many lives with the accumulated knowledge of prolonged resistance, with an education based on another way of life.

There is another field in dispute: history. The Spanish colonialists built

Catholic cathedrals on pre-Hispanic palaces and temples, bringing their heroes and saints to replace ours. Mexico's demand that the King and Queen of Spain apologize to the aboriginal peoples is not extemporaneous. José Martí wrote for the children of America portraits of Bolívar, Hidalgo and San Martín; of Céspedes, Agramonte, Gómez and Maceo. He built the necessary pantheon of Latin American poets, warriors and thinkers. *"There is no homeland of which the individual can be more proud than our unhappy American republics."* he said.

Fidel later recovered a hundred years of anti-colonial and anti-neocolonial struggles and made us contemporaries of all those heroes: *"We would have been like them then. They would have been like us today!"* he said. In the Plaza Bolívar in Caracas, while the great intellectual Luis Britto was talking about Venezuelan history, I could see how passers-by stopped to listen to him, and suddenly intervened smugly, because Chávez's Revolution had made them feel the history of their country as that of their family. In 1992, Cintio Vitier supported a daring thesis: *"In addition to shortages of all kinds, there is the tearing apart of those who leave and of those who, including children, have died in that attempt. We know very well who are the main responsible for this mass exodus, but there is an implacable fact that is beyond any explanation or argument: those who leave, assuming mortal risks, are Cubans to whom Martí's word has not reached."*

These days I read an article in ***El Nuevo Herald*** that corroborates the importance that neocolonialists give to cultural invasion. The author defines culture as *"the set of values and behaviors that determine the progress of a society,"* and then notes that *"(Cuban) society must begin to question the values and ideas of the past and to experiment with new socioeconomic approaches."* But where should these new approaches lead us? *"Towards a market economy and a democracy,"* says the author. That is, towards capitalism and in the case of Cuba, like any other poor country, towards dependence. The author uses the bourgeois (liberal) concept of democracy, which is no longer inoperative, to camouflage his intentions. His profile on the Internet clears things up very well: *"Today, he is devoted to the training of young Cuban dissidents."*

Cuban history is short, intense, and beautiful. Knowing ours strengthens us in the face of the imperial neo-colonizing offensive. To defend it is to defend ourselves. The enemy's strategy is to weaken our national pride, to dilute it, ours is to get attached to it; we are what we are capable of remembering and defending.

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