
OPINION: Fathers and Sons

By: Enrique Ubieta Gómez / Special for CubaSi

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My father would have turned 98 this January. I don't visit his grave often. That's not my way of remembering him. But his memory is alive, and not just when we talk about him, or think about him. He has his tricks. On this birthday he "asked" for his "favorite movie" in the voice of the guest on the television show that bears that name, and we watched it together: *Vivir por vivir*, with an impeccable Yves Montand, a mature gallant, and a restrained, exact Annie Girardot.

But he didn't live like that, he was an anonymous protagonist of a Revolution that transformed him, and changed the tracks of his life, taking him in unthinkable directions.

From his early years at *Revolución* newspaper, as the author of a column that showed his rapid evolution, marked by deep-rooted anti-imperialism and a literary vocation—I keep a photo from 1960 in which he receives the short story prize in an unknown contest from Alicia Alonso—cut short by the whirlwind of events, he went on to work first as a lawyer, and then, in an improvised career, as an economist, when many professionals from the petite bourgeoisie were leaving the country.

He suffered the departure of his parents and sisters, the contradictions of an education subject to sudden changes, and the misunderstandings typical of the time, with a terrible loyalty to himself. He did not leave, he did not renounce, he gave himself as he could, and educated his children as revolutionaries. That was a generation of heroes, not always of great actions, sometimes of successive and imperceptible personal transformations. I remember that he would come home very late from work, skinny, lanky, tender, and he would sit on the edge of our beds to tell made-up stories or to listen to the confessions, complaints or doubts of his children; his presence generated in us a wave of human warmth and confidence.

Despite the shortcomings, the deviations in his life, the good and bad decisions, some painful, he was still happy. I do not understand those who today demand a happiness measured in goods, which was never on the horizon of their lives. My father was happy because he gave his existence, his day to day, to the most important event of the 20th century in Cuba, from a trench outside the spotlight, but relevant. The shortages generated by the blockade

were enormous. Equality was regulated: ration books for food, for clothes, for toys. In the shop windows there were sometimes only posters calling for combat. It's not the nostalgia of the old people for a time gone by that makes me smile, when I remember the visits of the boys to the girls camp (they were separated), during the Schools in the Countryside. The mystique of the Revolution permeated everything, from the most intimate to the most public. The small horizon was in year 2000. Now it will be, I suppose, in 2050, just around the corner, even though I probably won't cross it. It is important that there is a horizon, even if it only serves to walk, as Eduardo Galeano wrote.

There are no failed or disappointed lives when they passionately contributed their strength to an ideal, to a collective hope. That we do not reach the dreamed "non-place", the Utopia that seemed close, is part of the risk assumed. The horizon seems closer or further away depending on the convictions that inspire us. But that does not devalue the effort. "The worst thing for a human being is not to belong to a collective hope," Andrés Pascal Allende, who was secretary general of the Chilean MIR during the years of clandestinity, and nephew of President Salvador Allende, once told me. He would have reasons to feel that he lived and fought in vain. "I am not despairing. On the contrary, I have great expectations," he said.

That's why it's sad that a segment of my children's generation is giving up on that hope. It's our fault. They are more concerned about possessions than ideals. They do not belong to anything, they can live and work where they pay better. But that's not everyone. There are others, those who will carry the weight of history on their shoulders, and they know Martí's warning to Máximo Gómez: "I offer you, without fear of refusal, this new job today that I have no other remuneration to offer you than the pleasure of your sacrifice and the probable ingratitude of men..." It's not about assuming politics as a profession; but it's necessary to create professional revolutionaries, as Lenin asked. It's necessary that we warn of the danger: a society establishes its historical coordinates by what its children wish for themselves, by the way in which they understand personal happiness.

We will not let the Apostle die, as Fidel did in the year of his centenary. We will not let Fidel die on his centenary. We will not let our parents die.

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