

The historical significance of Jose Marti's death

Leaving aside the problems afflicting human beings today, our Homeland had the privilege of being the cradle of one of the most extraordinary thinkers born in this hemisphere: Jose Marti.

Tomorrow, May 19th, will be 115th anniversary of his glorious death.

It would not be possible to appreciate the scope of his greatness without bearing in mind that the drama of his life was written with such extraordinary personalities as Antonio Maceo, an everlasting symbol of revolutionary firmness and the protagonist of the Baragua Protest, and Maximo Gomez, a Dominican internationalist and a teacher of Cuban combatants in the two wars of independence in which they took part. The Cuban Revolution, that for more than half a century has endured the battering of the most powerful empire that ever existed, was the result of the teachings of those predecessors.

Despite the fact that four days of entries to Marti's diary have remained out of reach to historians, what is reflected in the rest of that carefully written personal diary and other documents belonging to him suffices to know the details of what happened. Just like in the Greek tragedies, it was a discrepancy among giants.

On the eve of his death in combat he wrote to his dear friend Manuel Mercado: "...Every day now I am in danger of giving my life for my country and my duty --since I understand it and have the spirit to carry it out--in order to prevent, by the timely independence of Cuba, the United States from extending its hold across the Antilles and falling with all the greater force on the lands of our America. All I have done up to now and I will do is for that. It has had to be done in silence, and indirectly, for there are things that must be concealed in order to be attained: proclaiming them for what they are would give rise to obstacles too formidable to be overcome."

When Marti wrote these lapidary words, Marx had already written The Communist Manifesto in 1848, that is, 47 years before Marti's death, and Darwin had published his book on The Origin of Species in 1859, just to mention the two works that, in my view, have most influenced the history of mankind.

Marx was so extraordinarily selfless that perhaps his most important scientific work, The Capital, would have never been published if Frederic Engels had not collected and ordered the materials to which the author devoted his entire life. Engels did not only do that but was also the author of a work entitled Introduction to the Dialectics of Nature, where he anticipated the moment when the energy of the sun was depleted.

Man did not know then how to release the energy contained in the matter which Einstein described in his famous formula nor did he have the computers capable of performing billions of operations per second and of collecting and transmitting the billions of reactions per second that occur in the cells of the tens of pairs of chromosomes equally contributed by mother and father, a genetic and reproductive phenomenon that I learned about only after the victory of the Revolution, as I was looking for the best characteristics to be used in the production of food of animal origin in the conditions of our climate, which can be applied to plants subjected to the same heredity laws.

The incomplete education that the people with more resources received in school, --mostly private schools which were considered the best education centers-- made us illiterates with a little higher level than those who could neither read nor write or who attended public schools.

On the other hand, the first country in the world that attempted to implement Marx ideas was Russia,

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the least industrialized in Europe.

Lenin, who established the First International, believed that there was not any organization in the world more loyal to Marx's ideas than the Bolshevik fraction of the Social Democrat Workers' Party of Russia. Although a large part of that immense country lived in semi feudal conditions, its working class was very active and extremely combative.

Lenin was a restless critic of chauvinism in the books he wrote as of 1915. In his work Imperialism, Higher Stage of Capitalism written in April 1917, --months before the Bolshevik fraction of that Party seized power from the Menshevik fraction-- he showed that he was the first to understand the role to be played by the countries subjected to colonialism such as China and other very important nations in various regions of the world.

At the same time, Lenin's courage and audacity showed in his acceptance of the armored train that, for reasons of tactical convenience, the German army offered him to travel from Switzerland to the proximity of Petrograd. Due to this action his enemies, both inside and outside the Menshevik fraction of the Social Democrat Workers' Party of Russia, would soon accuse him of being a German spy. But if he had not used the famous train, the end of the war would have found him in distant and neutral Switzerland thus missing the optimal adequate minute.

Somehow, chance would have it that, thanks to their personal qualities, two sons of Spain would end up playing a prominent role in the Spanish-American War: the chief of the Spanish troops in the fortification of El Viso, which defended the access to Santiago from the heights of El Caney, an officer who fought until he was mortally wounded and who caused more than three hundred casualties among the Rough Riders --tough American riders organized by then Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt and who were forced by the hasty landing to leave their ardent horses behind--, and the Admiral who, following the stupid orders of the Spanish government, set sail from the Santiago de Cuba bay carrying on board the Marine Corps, a selective force, and left with his squadron the only way he could, that is, parading his ships, one by one, in the narrow access in front of the powerful Yankee fleet, which displayed its armored ships with its powerful cannons to shoot against the much slower and weak Spanish ships. As it was only logical, the Spanish ships with their combat troops and marines were sunk in the deep waters of the Bartlett Trench. Only one of them could make it to a few meters from the border of the abyss. The survivors of that force fell captive of the United States squadron.

Martinez Campos was arrogant and vindictive. As he was full of hatred for his failed attempt at pacifying the island like in 1871, he supported the vile and rancorous policy of the Spanish government. Valeriano Weyler was his replacement in command of Cuba; this man, in cooperation with those who sent the warship Maine looking for a justification for an intervention in Cuba, decreed the concentration of the population, an action that brought great suffering to the Cuban people and served as a pretext to the United States for the imposition of its first economic blockade, which caused a great shortage of food and the death of countless people.

Thus were facilitated the Paris negotiations where Spain renounced every right of sovereignty and property over Cuba after over 400 years of occupation in the name of the King of Spain, since mid October 1492, when Christopher Columbus said: "This is the most beautiful land that human eyes ever saw."

The Spanish version of the battle that decided the fate of Santiago de Cuba is more widely known; and, undoubtedly there were shows of heroism. This is clear from the number of officers and soldiers involved and the ranks of the former. They all defended the city in the most disadvantageous situation thus honoring the fighting traditions of the Spaniards who had defended their country from Napoleon Bonaparte's experienced troops in 1808 or the Spanish Republic from the Nazi fascist attack in 1936.

An additional disgrace fell on the Norwegian committee that awards the Nobel Prize when in the year 1906 it looked for ridiculous pretexts to grant that honor to Theodore Roosevelt, who was elected

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President of the United States twice, in 1901 and 1905. His true involvement in the battles of Santiago de Cuba leading the Rough Riders was not even clear, and there could have been much legend in the publicity he later received.

I can only bear witness to the way in which the heroic city fell in the hands of the Rebel Army on January 1st, 1959.

Then, Marti's ideas triumphed in our country!

Fidel Castro Ruz

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