
The Third Way or Political Centrism in Cuba

08/06/2017



For some time now has been brewing, essentially in the digital media, the idea of a “political centrism” in today's Cuba as part of the United States strategies to subvert the Cuban socialist pattern, despite the huge failures and slandering of the so-called “Cuban counterrevolution”. (i) A piece of news revealed by Wikileaks in 2010, showed as Jonathan Farrar, Head of the Interests Section of Washington in Havana back then, informed to the Department of State on April 15, 2009 how that "opposition" was really disconnected from the Cuban reality, it didn't have any influence power over the youths, and was more concerned about the money than in taking its platforms to wider sectors of society. (ii)

The political centrism in its origin is a concept of geometric root: the equidistant point to all ends. Supposedly it would be a political position placed between the left and right, between socialism and capitalism, a third way that "brings together the best ideas" in the ends that give it life and where moderation rises against any type of radicalism. Lenin qualified this posture of “treacherous utopism as a result of the bourgeois reformism”. No doubt those denominated third ways, or centrisms have never been a revolutionary option, but strategies to establish, save, remake, modernize or restore capitalism.

When moderation is reconsidered in front of the Cuban revolutionary radicalism – this means going to the roots, nothing related to extremism which is another thing - (iii), I can't help but finding certain analogies between that centrism that today is attempted to articulate in Cuba, with the nineteenth century autonomism.

The autonomism as a political trend was born in the first half of the XIX century, but it becomes a political party starting since 1878, as one of the fruits of the revolution of 1868. (iv) It was a trend that shared historical time with independentism, traditionalism, and annexionism. It was the trend par excellence of moderation, of evolution, enemy of the radical Cuban independentists. They also took a position "equidistant", between the traditionalism - the defense of the status quo - and the independence, but in defining moments, they joined traditionalism to brake and attack the revolution, which they considered the worst of all evils. Famous personalities of autonomism turned to annexionist ideas after the North American intervention-occupation in Cuba. Its main leaders were recognized for

their intellectual skills, they were great speakers, but with an elite thinking, essentially bourgeois, therefore they could never rallied Cuban masses behind them. The Cuban people back then what needed the least was laboratory ideas. It was for this reason that when the struggle for independence restarted in 1895, the autonomist party was completely out of place in new national reality. The autonomism defended a moderate nationalism that excluded the masses. Their main goal was not severing the bond with "the Spanish mother land", but in modernizing its governance in the Island, no wonder the Cuban patriotic vanguard, lead by José Martí, fought against their ideas so hard. On January 31st, 1893 in one of his extraordinary speeches, Martí said: "... it was the particular case that those claiming the political dogma of evolution were simply retrogrades who kept for a people formed in the revolution the solutions imagined before it... ". (v)

However, the idea of supporting in Cuba a third force - moderate, centered or third way – gain strength in the U.S. foreign policy in the late 50's, with the goal of preventing the 26 de Julio Movement come into power, something that became an obsession for the Eisenhower administration by yearend 1958. This tendency should be equidistant between Batista and Fidel Castro and its development was stimulated in both the political and the military fields. The CIA local station in Havana was the first to handle this idea and later the main executor. Officer David Atlee Philips confirms so in his autobiographical book *The Night Watch*, when he highlights that James Noel – head of the CIA station in Havana - had informed him in one of his few frequent meetings, on his recommendation to the U.S. government of discreetly sponsoring the action of a third political force in Cuba, "a group between Castro in the left and Batista in the right (...)". (vi)

In February 1958, William Morgan a North American secret service agent had joined the II National Front of Escambray lead by Eloy Gutiérrez Menoyo. His mission was to become the second in command of that guerrilla, something he achieved in no time as well as his rank as Commander. Morgan would not be the only agent the United States infiltrated in that area with the intention of stimulate a third guerilla force that could oppose at some point the forces from Sierra Maestra lead by Fidel Castro. (vii) The United States was also involved in other complots where different names of personalities who could join a political option that snatched off the hands of Fidel Castro the revolutionary victory, among them: the colonel Ramón Barquín, Justo Carrillo, head of the Montecristi Group, and Manuel Antonio, Tony, de Varona. Still on December 23, 1958 at a meeting of the National Security Council, Eisenhower expressed his hope in the growth, strength and influences of a "third force". (viii)

The creation of a "third forces" it was not only promoted by the United States, but also by some domestic politicians. "The Third Force – highlights Jorge Ibarra Guitart - was a movement of private civic institutions that representing the feeling of important sectors of the bourgeoisie and the small bourgeoisie promoted peace measures and reconciliation with the régime. The instigator, behind the curtains was José Miró Cardona who from the Friends of the Republic Society had already planned the tactics of mobilizing bourgeois institutions to force the régime to reach an agreement. This was the time to try such tactics, because there were circumstances that favored it: the bourgeoisie, when noticing that with every passing day more revolutionary organizations gain ground was worried by the eminent threat that represented for their political and economic interests, the development of a civil war with a popular participation". (ix)

As it was impossible for the United States to prevent the victory of the Cuban Revolution and the coming into power of 26 de Julio forces, in the early months of 1959, Washington's main objective was to support and encourage personalities who within the revolutionary government were considerate "moderate", of center, as opposed to those who were qualified as "extremist", to avoid that the Revolution did not have a deep social reach. (x)

When Fernando Martínez Heredia, highlights that today in Cuba there is a right nationalism with ambitions of center that has "a cultural accumulation to which refer (xi), he is mentioning the long history of that nationalism that has as antecedent the political attitudes of autonomism; which in the years of Bourgeois Neocolonial Republic admitted and defended the dominance. The U.S. government has used it many times with the purpose of braking, avoiding or achieving situations after the revolution that kept safe the structures of capitalist dominance in Cuba, under better permission.

Today we see that right nationalism that is stimulated by those who oppose us, under the deceiving cloth of centrism. It pursues the sole objective that the desperate attempt of restoring capitalism in Cuba. Once again, it will be failed attempt, because the main obstacle this trend has encountered is that its ideas have never sunk into the people. That people which throughout history has embraced the independent, patriotic, national-revolutionary and anti-imperialist tradition; never that of autonomism, annexionism or right nationalism.

(i) See text of Esteban Morales: The Cuban counterrevolution has never existed, in: Esteban Morales and Elier Ramírez, Approaches to the conflict United States - Cuba, Political Publisher, Havana, 2015, pp.363-367. Morales wonders in this work if this counterrevolution can be considered Cuban, as it practically committed suicide after being born assuming an agenda imposed by the U.S. government.

(ii) See: : <http://razonesdecuba.cubadebate.cu/cablegates-wikileaks/los-estados-unidos-y-el-papel-de-la-oposicion-en-cuba/>

(iii) Speech on September 3, 1979 in the opening session of the NOAL Summit with venue in Havana, Fidel expressed: "What can be refuted to Cuba? That it's a socialist country? Yes, we are a socialist country (APPLAUSES), but we don't seek to impose our ideas and our system on anyone neither inside nor outside the Movement. We don't have anything to be ashamed of for being socialist! That we made a radical revolution in Cuba? Yes, we are revolutionary radicals, but we don't seek to impose anybody, and much less to the No Aligned Movement, our radicalism". See: : <http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/1979/esp/f030979e.html>

(iv) See Elier Ramírez Cañedo and Carlos Joane Rosario Grasso, The autonomism in the crucial hours of the Cuban Nation, Social Sciences Editorial house, Havana, 2008.

(v) José Martí, Speech in Hardman Hall, New York, October of 1889, 10 in: Speeches, Social Sciences Editorial House, Havana, 1974, p.195.

(vi) Cited by Andrés Zaldívar Diéguez and Pedro Etcheverry Vázquez, in: A fascinating history. The Trujillista conspiracy, Captain San Luis Editorial, Havana, 2009, p.50

(vii) Ibidem, pp.41-42.

(viii) Francisca López Civeira, The Government of Eisenhower before the Cuban Revolution: A new scenario, in: <http://www.radiolaprimerisima.com/articulos/2527>

(ix) Cited by Andrés Zaldívar Diéguez and Pedro Etcheverry Vázquez in: Ob.Cit, p.51.

(x) Abundant information on this regard can be found on the work of Luis M.Buch and Reinaldo Suárez, Cuban Revolutionary Government. First Steps, Social Sciences Editorial house, Havana, 2004.

(xi) See Cubadebate, March 17, 2016:

<http://www.cubadebate.cu/noticias/2016/03/17/obama-no-pierda-la-oportunidad-de-hacer-algo-historico-podcast-video-y-fotos/#.WSmPPdFB-sx>
