

Fidel Castro and the Moncada Program

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This August 13 will mark 92 years since the birth of the historical leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro (1926-2016), a date that these days invites to reflect on the legacy of a man committed to the just causes.

The Revolution led by Fidel Castro has had among its pillars the social focus, benefiting millions of Cubans condemned to exclusion by capitalism, a change projected in the Moncada Program, a document presented long before the triumph of January 1, 1959.

After the joy of triumph and before the incredulous gaze of the enemies, the revolutionary process in Cuba, articulated by Fidel Castro, set in motion the necessary social transformation.

When they entered Havana, on that memorable January 8, the rebels met with various factions within the forces that had supported the Revolution. That was, according to official historiography, the first challenge they faced.

In one of his first speeches, he said: 'Tyranny has been overthrown. The joy is immense. And yet, much remains to be done.' In that same message, he warned the Cuban people that 'perhaps everything will be more difficult in the future.'

'Telling the truth is the first duty of every revolutionary. Deceiving the people, waking up deceitful illusions, would always bring the worst consequences, and I believe that we have to warn people against excessive optimism,' he said.

With the political forces together - members of the Revolutionary Directorate, of the Socialist Party, the peasants and workers - Fidel implemented the first revolutionary measures that marked the destiny of the nation.

From his position as Prime Minister of the revolutionary cabinet, he spoke to the people about economic liberation and land reform that would be the axis of the changes that were coming. This was included in the book History of

Cuba (1959-1999).

The authors of the volume, the historians José Cantón and Arnaldo Silva, stressed that before resigning the position of Prime Minister, Fidel announced other measures such as the creation of an agency to resolve the issue of housing.

The popular clamor made him return to the position of Prime Minister in a ceremony on July 26. At that time, he was aware that the process to achieve an independent Cuba, economically and politically, should be strengthened.

They destroyed the archaic institutional apparatuses that served the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista and established the concept of 'popular power' from the grassroots of the communities, an idea that continues to this day.

The American military mission present on the island, after agreement with the United States, was canceled. The situation gave way to the forced reorganization of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, heirs to the Mambi insurrectionary struggle.

'Fourteen sugar mills were intervened to investigate the origin of their capitals, as well as the Cuban Telephone Company, an American monopoly involved in fraudulent transactions with Batista,' the historians said.

Of all the measures taken, the agrarian reform was the core of the revolutionary process led by Fidel. Signed at the headquarters of La Plata on May 17, 1959, the law benefited nearly 100,000 peasant families.

The legislation eliminated the right of foreign companies to own land in Cuba except in some cases and also ordered the creation of the National Institute for Agrarian Reform (INRA).

That was one of the main points contained in the Moncada Program, presented by Fidel himself when he delivered his defense speech against the assaults on the Moncada and Carlos Manuel de Céspedes barracks in eastern Cuba on July 26, 1953.

The educational transformation in the country, one of the most precarious sectors, was another sector included thanks to its political vision.

'Given the picture of one million illiterates and 600,000 children without schools, in contrast to 10,000 unemployed teachers, the creation of 10,000 new classrooms was planned to cover mainly the gap in rural areas,' historians said.

The success of the Literacy Campaign was an example of the transforming character of the Cuban Revolution since its early years.

Another of the challenges that Fidel faced as a revolutionary leader was the powerful neighbor of the North who was not happy to see how his political and economic interests were banished.

Relations with Washington became strained from the start. When Batista fled before the imminent triumph of 'Barbudos', the ambassador of the North American nation played a role of 'mediator' in the conformation of the first Government. Seeing that he was not going to get his way, the United States implemented an agenda of harassment against the Island that has been maintained during all these years of the Revolution.

The concretion of the economic, financial and commercial blockade imposed in the early years, their participation in attacks against Fidel, and support for defamation campaigns of the Cuban reality were part of the actions of the northern nation.

Fidel, knowing the powerful enemy, did not surrender and only 90 miles away declared the socialist character of the Revolution. That fact marked the process on the Island and would mark the relations with the United States.

Before the diplomatic isolation of the first years of the Revolution, Fidel exposed the First Declaration of Havana, on September 2, 1960.

The fact that prompted such measure was the censure against Cuba during the meeting of foreign ministers of the

Organization of American States (OAS) in Costa Rica, in retaliation for the Cuban decision to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.

As soon as the Revolution triumphed, Fidel put into practice what was promised and with respect to the thought of the national hero, José Martí. The different stages experienced by Cuba in its liberation process had not been in vain.
