
What We Defended in Girón

By: Bertha Mojena / Special for CubaSi

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Great-grandparents and grandparents of many Cuban families today tell that those days were tremendously instructive, shocking, no matter how far or close they were involved in the direct combative actions that followed that declaration of Socialism or Death.

It was news that appeared, at times, in fragments, but the movement throughout the country was one of preparation, of combative unity, of knowing that they were participants in a process that in just over two years had transformed a nation and although it had only just truly begun the Revolution, they knew they were responsible for defending, at the cost of any sacrifice, what they had achieved because they were sure what they wanted for their children and grandchildren.

"Perhaps many of us did not understand what socialism was all about and we even felt a little fear because of all the bad things that were said about communism, but after listening to Fidel on the corner of 23 and 12 Streets we had before us the huge challenge of trusting, of believing in what he told us and above all, not to allow our sovereignty to be trampled, much less by the same Yankees who took our independence from us in 1899," my grandfather would say in a family conversation after remembering those glorious hours of 1961 that we are reliving these days.

And in the face of such profound reflection from someone who is already close to 90 years old and is also semi-illiterate in terms of schooling, it makes me think again and again how far we are still from imagining, feeling and weighing in all its magnitude the bravery, altruism and dedication of those who left everything in those days to go to battle for Cuba, which was the battle for survival, for the right to be free, for the defense of the chosen path.

Girón, then, cannot and should never remain in just anecdotes, documents, glorious facts that grandparents and great-grandparents or history books tell, in what we see over and over again in the media or exchange in family conversations. It has to be the living essence of this nation, the banner of the capacity for resistance, patriotism and human dignity.

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From the blood that wrote the name and ratified the leader of all, to the militiamen who took up arms, those who were on the front line in the sands of Playa Girón, those who raised their rifles for socialism and then went into combat, even those who defended us by land, air and sea, the mothers who did not have their children back, the Nemesia who lost her white shoes and the accurate military tank that dealt the final blow, forged the destinies that have brought us to this point here.

The following path was not easy, perhaps it never will be, it's imperfect, full of obstacles, challenges and setbacks, but since then we knew that our position of principles, our decision and the one that must necessarily shape the new times to come, will be the same: a massive faith in victory, united, because only in this way will they never even take away our sovereignty, nor the socialism that we defended in Girón.

Translated by Amilkal Labañino / CubaSí Translation Staff
