
The Pride that Saves

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The fight against cultural colonialism encounters an obstacle that sometimes becomes insurmountable: the colonized don't know that they are colonized. Their national and personal self-esteem has deteriorated irreversibly; everything they say or do in the metropolis (which does not present itself as such) is superior. In Cuba, before 1959, colonized politicians believed that everything was possible except going against the interests of the United States. That's why, in the sixties, they traveled to Miami with the peace of mind of vacationers, almost without luggage: the Revolution.

The revolution could not last long. But Cubans defeated imperialism at Girón and thirteen American presidents afterwards. We do feel the pride of being the first socialist revolution in the Western Hemisphere and the first free territory in America.

The revolutions in the neocolonized South restore the confidence of the people: you can do it, we can do it. Because of my age, I did not experience this in Cuba, but I did in Venezuela: the elderly lady who has just learned to read and write, and with total confidence says, "I'm going to continue studying until I graduate as a lawyer." The Revolution turned this small island into a power: in arts, in biotechnology, in health, in sports. The triumphs in sports, due to their popular character and their capacity to unite a nation and generate confidence, have been pillars of national pride. A pride of a poor and supportive nation, open to all cultures and all embraces.

That's why imperialism, with all its media power and money, tried to destroy the already deep-rooted perception (which matched the facts) that we were almost invincible in baseball. When the amateur sports system collapsed, the market politicized the sport: they could not beat us and they took away our winning baseball players, many of the best. Then they planted lies, seeds of distrust, the belief in the superiority of professionalism, especially the North American one. That's also the role of the market: the individual race to succeed (that is, to obtain, at all costs, the combined glory of success and material wealth) since "we only live once," makes us forget who we are, where we come from, and also who the supposed or real benefactors are. The dispute between imperialism and the insurgent Homeland is presented as a matter for politicians, which does not concern us.

In my neighborhood grocery store, a woman mentioned that on a recent trip to the United States, where a daughter or son lives, I don't know, she had to undergo emergency surgery. The operation, due to its complexity, or the sophisticated medical equipment and medications required, would not have been possible in Cuba. Then she concluded: I thank the United States for saving my life. She did not mention the American doctor who saved her—which would have been understandable—but rather the country that prevents hers from having the equipment and medications necessary to save other lives like hers. However, in northern Italy, during the height of Covid-19 pandemic, the sophisticated equipment that Cuban doctors and nurses had to learn to use there, nor the abundance of medications, were not enough. The brigade that crossed the Atlantic from a poor and blockaded country saved many lives with the knowledge accumulated from a long resistance, with an education based on another way of life.

There's another field in dispute: history. The Spanish colonialists built Catholic cathedrals on top of pre-Hispanic palaces and temples, they brought their heroes and saints to superimpose them on ours. Mexico's demand that the Kings of Spain apologize to the aboriginal peoples is not out of date. José Martí wrote for the children of America profiles of Bolívar, Hidalgo and San Martín; of Céspedes, Agramonte, Gómez and Maceo. He built the necessary pantheon of Latin American poets, warriors and thinkers. "There's no homeland in which man can have more pride than in our painful American republics," he said.

Fidel later recovered a hundred years of anticolonial and antineocolonial struggles and made us contemporaries of all his heroes: "We'd have been like them then, they would have been like us today!" he said. In Plaza Bolívar in Caracas, while the great intellectual Luis Britto spoke about Venezuelan history, I could see how passersby stopped to listen to him, and suddenly intervened with self-sufficiency, because the Chávez Revolution had made them feel the history of their country as that of their family. In 1992, Cintio Vitier supported a bold thesis: "To the shortages of all kinds is added the heartbreak of those who leave and of those who, including children, have died in this attempt. We know very well who are the main responsible for this massive exodus, but there's an implacable fact that is beyond all explanation or argument: those who leave, assuming mortal risks, are Cubans to whom the word of Martí has ??not reached."

A few days back I read an article in El Nuevo Herald that corroborates the importance that neocolonialists give to cultural penetration. The author defines culture as "the set of values ??and behaviors that determine the course of a society," and then goes on saying that "(Cuban) society must begin to question the values ??and ideas of the past and to experiment with new socioeconomic approaches." But where should these new approaches lead us? "Towards a market economy and democracy," says the author. That is, towards capitalism and in the case of Cuba, like any other poor country, towards dependency. The author uses the bourgeois (liberal) concept of democracy, which is no longer effective, to camouflage his intentions. His profile on the Internet makes things clear: "Today he is dedicated to the training of young Cuban dissidents."

Cuban history is brief, intense and beautiful. Knowing it strengthens us against the imperial neo-colonial offensive. To defend it is to defend ourselves. The enemy's strategy is to weaken our national pride, to dilute it, ours is to hold on to it; we are indeed, what we are capable of remembering and defending.

Translated by Amilkal Labañino / CubaSí Translation Staff
