The power of truth and ideas



On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of Fidel's historic May Day speech on the concept of Revolution, Granma shares an essay on one of its fundamental elements.

The truth first. It cannot be otherwise if we are to rise to the ethical dimensions of the transformative revolutionary process we defend, which we endeavor to deepen, despite attacks and setbacks.

I leave it to the philosophers to clear up the old conceptual dilemma about truth that has occupied this branch of knowledge since the times of Plato and Aristotle. I'll stick to ethics, aspiring to assume realities from an honest, transparent perspective, focused on the need to expose them and act accordingly.

The inclusion of this moral precept in the concept of revolution outlined by Fidel, on May Day in 2000, is not fortuitous: "There is no force on earth capable of crushing the power of truth and ideas." Nor is the phrase that precedes this quote: Revolution is "... never lying or violating ethical principles."

As I reflected on the phrase, I recalled Fidel as the young lawyer who exercised his right to self-defense in the trail he faced for leading the assault on the Moncada Barracks, when he took the stand to speak truths that dealt blows, knowing full well that the dictatorship's regime would attempt to discredit him.

He anticipated the attack at the very beginning of his statement: "I know they will force me into silence for many years; I know that they will try to hide the truth by all possible means; I know that a conspiracy of oblivion will be mounted against me. But my voice will not be drowned out: it gains strength in my heart when I feel the most alone, and I want to give my heart all the warmth that cowardly souls deny me."

With the truth on his side, Fidel, on many other occasions, throughout more than half a century, faced serious situations from which he emerged victorious, together with the people. In my memory I recall two such moments in particular, perhaps because of the shock they caused: one, when he announced on the Malecón, May 19, 1970, that the ten million ton sugar harvest would not be reached during the longest seasonal campaign in the nation's history. The impossibility of reaching the goal, reported by Fidel personally, came in the wake of the popular euphoria generated by the return of 11 fishermen kidnapped by the usual enemies. Everyone felt the pain, but also confidence that we would find a way, as he said, to turn the setback into victory.

A second unforgettable moment takes me back to the newly opened Antonio Maceo Plaza de la Revolución in Santiago de Cuba, on October 14, 1991 - a rainy night at the closing of the Fourth Party Congress. Faced with the collapse of the Soviet Union and European socialist countries, and the economic crisis that was bearing down on us – more than a few abroad, and also some inside the country, were calculating the terrible consequence the events implied - Fidel put the truth first. Two years earlier, at the July 26th celebration in Camagüey, he had given a premonitory warning of what could happen.

Almost at the end of his speech, he insisted: "Under the leadership of the Revolution and the socialist government, we will adopt the measures needed to ensure that our factories operate, so that our workers work, so we can move forward under these difficult conditions, and following the principle of protecting everyone, so that there is never a citizen left defenseless in our country, by sharing what we have, we will find ways to save the country, to save the Revolution, to save socialism."

That was then, and now our government bases its work on this same perspective. But as important as this statement of solidarity and responsible planning was another: "Men may die, but examples will never die; men may die, but ideas will never die."

The relationship between the defense of truth and the value of ideas runs through not only Fidel's thinking, but that of the Cuban political vanguard giving his thought continuity. A disciple of the leader and a leader himself, Raúl has never failed to uphold the truth, no matter how hard it may have been, and has educated cadres and party members in that principle, demanding absolute transparency and honesty in attitude and action.

The strength of a country besieged for decades has been built on this firm foundation, both on the economic, financial and commercial order, in response to the relentless blockade of successive U.S. administrations that insist on the extraterritorial application of their policy, and in the media by corporations that represent hegemonic interests.

In the war that is being waged against us, we know that the truth is a principal victim. It is enough to review what is said in the corporate media about Cuban society to see Goebbels' strategy at work. When this distorted version of Cuban reality becomes untenable, there are those who resort to a kind of post-modern relativization of the truth, by which they justify the right to lie and discount ideas.

But as Fidel stated 20 years ago, and even earlier, in the days following the Moncada, the truth, no matter how it is obscured, ends up making its way. In the end, our history has taught us the validity of the phrase by French writer Romain Rolland, adopted and developed by the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci: The truth is always revolutionary.

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