

José Martí and his embrace by Fidel Castro

By Luis Toledo Sande, January 27, 2017

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Translated by Tom Whitney

Do I have to tell you how much prideful purpose, how much impulsive force is boiling in my soul? That I am bearing my unhappy people in my head and that it seems to me that their freedom one day will depend on my own breath of life? -- Letter from José Martí to Manuel Mercado, July 6, 1878

Fidel, a voracious reader like Jose Martí, could surely have used Martí's words to describe himself : "Napoleon was born on a carpet where Europe's war was to be found; I had to be born on a pile of books." But in another note Martí himself fashioned a confession that complements this and it applies equally to Fidel: "the book that interests me most is the book of life, and it's also the most difficult to read. It's the one that has to be consulted the most in anything referring to politics, which, ultimately, is the art of making sure people can enjoy their natural faculties in the well-being of existence."

If they hadn't followed that guideline, they would have found themselves in a void, sterilized against thought and action, even waiting to see if necessary responses for making sense of and confronting serious problems having to be resolved creatively would be arriving from the commercial and political centers of the world. These were challenges not limited to Cuba; they would arrive from Our America, from the America of the North, and from elsewhere on the planet. Martí and Fidel forged a guide against cultural colonialism from wherever it may have come from, or – we are thinking about today – from wherever it may come from.

The road for correctly evaluating the presence in Fidel of the man he called, "the most inspired and most universal of Cuban politicians," and "eternal guide of our people," won't be found by looking for coincidences in temperaments – a theme that goes beyond this article – and even less likely, through making mere textual comparisons. As for the latter, in making the selection and writing the prologue – and with the institutional signature of the Center for Martí Studies — the present writer was aware of pages from the volume by Fidel titled "Jose Martí, The Intellectual Author" (1983).

As they communicated their theses, Martí and Fidel enriched their texts immeasurably, and the magnetic effect of the one on the other was immense. To employ the paralyzing criterion of thinking that ideas come only from ideas would hardly be a reliable way to assess the relation between them; that would end up turning Hegel endwise. They were both conscious of the worth of ideas, and of their value in elucidating practice, but they knew that the roots giving rise to ideas are found in the subsoil of reality.

That fact must be taken into account in thinking about why Fidel declared Martí to be the intellectual author of the events of July 26, 1953, and thereby – it's worth adding – of the revolutionary stage it unleashed that, moving on to the present time, is still alive and heading into the future. Fidel it was who graduated as a lawyer in 1950. His predecessor had done so in 1874, but was never recognized as a lawyer due to lack of money for the required payment. Fidel took on his own defense when he was tried for those actions for which he was the leader. In some way that recalls the teenager who in 1869 stood up before the colonial authorities in the trial that sentenced him to prison and forced labor.

In his plea, Fidel reiterated what he had said responding to earlier questions: Martí served as the mentor of that revolutionary action. But he moved beyond that declaration and beyond quoting from the Apostle and commenting about him. These were mere speech-making maneuvers for validating himself through the prestige of Martí's word. He focused on the purposes of the [Moncada] action.

Inherited goals

Launched by combatants from various parts of the country, and after a necessary update of their intentions, the heroic deed would presumably open up the road to achieving what Martí's project had not been able to carry out. In that regard, the young leader embarked upon a search for Martí's ideas in

his writings. In prison he left traces of his passion in the copy of Martí's *Complete Works* that he read: he underlined and made notes.

Celebrating historical justice, that reader was able to proclaim that the deeds of 1953 honored the centennial of the Apostle, that they had been conceived and carried out in order to prevent that Martí died with his legacy damaged and rejected so much.

That regime, the one targeted by Fidel, was an instrument of the imperialist power, now at its peak. But in 1898, even as it was taking shape, it was hatching schemes that Martí wanted to stop in time. They involved taking over Cuba and Puerto Rico, and with that additional strength, the United States would dominate all of Our America and begin disrupting the equilibrium of the world until it became a hegemonic nation.

It would be impossible, without studying a similar reality, to understand the basic restructuring of the Republic set up in 1902. Basically it was quite the opposite of the moral republic Martí had struggled for. This lesson wasn't dealt with in the 19th century and deserved being taken up again, and had to be. It was from this root that revolutionary Cuba grew. The call was for it to be established on new republican bases and to eradicate the legacy of the colony and the presence of neocolonialism.

In commemorating the fiery events of 1953 20 years later, Fidel was quite explicit in saying, "Martí taught us his burning patriotism, his impassioned love for liberty, the dignity and decency of men and women, his repudiation of despotism, and his limitless faith in the people. The moral foundation and the historical legitimacy of our armed action came from his revolutionary teaching. That's why we said he was the intellectual author of July 26." And on the road traced by Martí and under Fidel's guidance, the socialist republic was founded and took shape in 1976. There's an aspiration from Martí presiding over its *Constitution*: "Let the first law of the republic be the cultivation by Cubans of full dignity for men and women."

In "The Third Year of the Cuban Revolutionary Party," an article published in *Patria* April 17, 1894, and subtitled "The soul of the Revolution and the duty of Cuba in America," Martí specified what Cuban independence meant for all of Our America, and for reinforcing equilibrium in the world. That's why he declared that, "Whoever rebels with Cuba today, rebels for all time."

He developed that idea, validated by history, in various texts. One of them was the *Manifiesto de Montecristi* (*Manifesto of Montecristi*) of March 25, 1895, where, with the war having begun a month earlier, on February 24, he called it "a far-reaching human event and a timely service that the judicious heroism of the Antilles lends to the stability and just interaction of the American nations and to the still unsteady equilibrium of the world." He developed that idea, validated by history, in various texts.

On the same date, leaving to occupy his place in the national liberation conflict he had prepared and realizing he was "in the entry-way of a great duty," he reaffirmed his purposes in a letter to his Dominican friend Federico Henríquez y Carvajal. "I will arouse the world," he insisted.

Words, ideas, deeds

Without any sign of vanity, Martí was thus expressing an optimism that reminds one of Fidel who, after the expeditionary force had been dispersed due to military reverses following disembarkation from the yacht Granma, found himself surrounded by a meager group of comrades, short of supplies; he exclaimed: "Now, yes, we are winning the war!"

Martí was expressing a conviction he had declared many years before, one he would also reiterate in another letter of testimony written to his Mexican friend Manuel Mercado the day before he fell in combat. There, he emphasized the urgency of preventing expansionist plans of the United States from becoming a reality. He was lining up actions against them, he confessed to Mercado: "Whatever I did until now, and will do, it's for that," although ostensibly he was fighting against the Spanish army.

Fidel also followed a pathway that had a planetary reach. In the Sierra Maestra, he reacted to the destruction of a farmer's house by a U. S. bomb released from one of the tyrant's airplanes. At the time, the rebel leader confessed to his comrade in struggle Celia Sánchez that he was responding not simply from an emotional impulse. His concern, instead, was an entire program. Once victory against the tyranny was achieved, he would dedicate himself until he died to what was central to his actions and ideas: fighting against imperialism.

That attitude was necessary in order to put the homeland on the road to eradicating the misery that the majority of people were suffering, and to creating conditions for educational development and cultural conquests that would be definitively inserted as part of the course outlined by Martí: "To have culture is the only way to be free." Such a seed-planting concept situated culture into a dimension inseparable from books and reading — but not one ending up as academic bookishness. People would have to think on their own.

One need not be amazed, therefore, on discovering that Fidel, defending himself at his trial in 1953, which we've already referred to, offers a lot more than quotations from Martí. He outlines instead a way of seeing reality through Martí's eyes and with no passing clouds that interfere with the potential of Martí's legacy to germinate. It was on such a basis that, giving the lie to falsities from a bloody thug, he declared in the pages of *Bohemia* for May 29, 1955, that, "The Apostle is the guide to my life." In order to embrace the inheritance from Martí, his most accomplished disciple and follower didn't content himself with using Martí's texts as a source of elegant aphorisms, but rather he saw them as a compass for living. If anything, Fidel was paying homage to his roots.

The phrase he used as the title of his plea to the court, *History will absolve me*, derives from a speech delivered by Martí on February 17, 1892, and known as "La Oración de Tampa y Cayo Hueso" (The Oration of Tampa and Key West).

Consistent with the ethical considerations that informed it, Martí finished it by referring to work he would pursue aimed at unity as he formed the Cuban Revolutionary Party; "History won't declare us guilty!" he said.

In his defense where Fidel speaks of the grief that would have resulted if the Cuban people had let their Apostle die, there are so many traces of this that the best way to show it is to reproduce the whole text.

Reading Fidel's weighty declaration that, "we will first sink the island in the sea before consenting to be slaves of anybody," how can we forget the conclusion of Martí's speech at Steck Hall in New York January 24, 1880? There, the orator declared; "Before giving up on our commitment to make the homeland free and prosperous, the oceans of the South will be joined to the oceans of the North and a serpent will be born from an eagle's egg." He also stated: "Despots don't know that the people, the grieving masses, are the true leaders of revolutions." This idea becomes the foundation of Fidel's concept of the people put forth in *History will absolve me*.

Memory from the heart

There was something organic in Fidel's embrace of Martí. In Spanish, the etymology of the word "recorder" speaks of that which is "*brought back to the heart*," and this is not only in the figurative sense: the word "cordial" has to do with that organ. And in other languages, "*learning from memory*" is said to be "*learning by heart*." One proceeds this way in trying to understand Fidel's assimilation of Martí's texts.

In respect to both the "The Oration of Tampa and Key West" and "History will absolve me," one could add, for one example, the passage in Martí's letter of December 15, 1893, in which he tells Antonio Maceo that, "I don't work for my fame, since all the fame in the world fits into a kernel of corn."

Fidel condensed that declaration into a maxim that has gone around the planet: "All the glory of the world fits into a kernel of corn." Martí spoke of fame, and his disciple, who gained power and always

showed himself inclined to put restraints on seizing glory, appropriated that text in a way that goes beyond the realm of mere vocabulary.

Any legitimate and lofty re-creation offers suggestive flashes. Some years after the victory of 1959, amidst brutal imperialist hostility, the leader of the Cuban revolution referred to his people's heroism. They merited not only the victory and a place in history, he said, but also "a place in glory." On reasserting aphoristically what Martí said to Maceo, Fidel stressed, maybe without intending, the value of the natural and the elemental. The author of this article heard an eminent student of Martí, influenced by patriotism and poetry, say in this regard: "that speaks of the greatness of humility and a kernel of corn."

Paying homage to humility on the part of Martí and Fidel is characteristic of extraordinary human beings, although they aren't resigned to being insignificant. Someone like Martí can support something that, pronounced without his greatness, can end up in injustice and ingratitude. "No one is a man by himself," he said, adding that, "his people installed whatever makes up a man. In vain does nature concede privileged qualities to some of its children; they will be dust and a scourge if they are not made flesh with their people. But if they do go with the people and serve with arm and voice, that way they will see themselves elevated on high, like the flowers that a mountain bears on its summit."

The people can only commit energy characteristic of greatness and, at that stage, with confidence in those who are empowered to be responsible with them. Such a relationship between the individual and the collective, between leader and people, accounts for the permanence of Martí in the memory and affection of the homeland. It explains the capacity of Fidel to embrace that lesson, and give it enriching continuity on a road where both men fixed the star of their personal mark.

An achievement of similar reach would be unthinkable without the talent they both had, and without the value that they knew to assign to revolutionary unity. They nurtured it with the moral authority of their entering into struggle with an attitude that recalls Martí's letter to Henríquez y Carvajal, already mentioned. He says there, "We have to extend both respect and loving, human meaning to sacrifice."

For him, that achievement went along with his capacity of surviving after death, a capacity that was consummated through his own power of communicating, through the commitment of clear-headed fighters who picked up his legacy again, and through the fervor he generated in the people, and for good reason. Thus the patriotic and revolutionary inheritance of one who passed through the Presidio "serene among the scoundrels" survived uncorrupted amid the mire of the neocolonial Republic.

From light to light

Likewise, the legacy of the leader of the struggle known par excellence at that stage as the Cuban Revolution will live far beyond his death too. If it shined in a special way during the night of November 25, 2016 – We remember words from Ernesto Che Guevara: in "the bright and sad days of the crisis of the Caribbean" — it left sad days for the homeland. They are sad through the dimensions of the loss. But they are shining days too through the reserves of patriotic and revolutionary potential that the people confirmed before his departure.

In defining in *Patria* the nature of the revolution he was putting together for restructuring the country and making it independent, Martí expressed confidence in the people. He did so with a certainty that enabled him to prove to patriots living on the island and to those who, like him, had to emigrate that they were uniting ideals and actions.

With that light he appreciated that the will to serve the homeland came first in everybody: "We do have scoundrels, but also people who are much greater. There will be a humble person for every swaggering one; we will be the wing with that other wing. And with two wings we'll fly better. We aren't men here, we are friends of mankind. We are not passions here: we are a wick being consumed so that our people shine: we are carpets our people can walk on."

Such was the frame of mind of those who cast their lot "with the poor people of the world," and thus foreshadowed what Fidel would define as "from the humble, by the humble, and for the humble." Neither one nor the other would be much favored by those who aspired to solidify their place on the

backs of the people, and who that way would serve the boss, Yankee or Spanish, in order that that their privileges might be guaranteed — as Martí wrote to Mercado in his last letter.

In that letter he mentioned the eventual fate assigned to him by the assembly of representatives of people who were rebelling, although only with difficulty would such an assembly have trusted any other, he being the living leader of the Republic in arms. Martí declared that, “I know to disappear. But my thoughts would not disappear, nor would my obscurity leave me embittered.” He was thinking about the possible obscurity of the destiny already alluded to, not about his own obscurity, because there was none of that about him. A man of light, he went on: “The moment we take shape, we will proceed; I will keep my promise on this, or others will.”

What with uncertainties and tragic stories – his own death in combat stood out among them – it was necessary to wait for the generation of Martí’s centennial, its vanguard being led by Fidel. It had grown up amid struggles following the tragedy of Dos Ríos; The Maestro’s plans would be turned into reality. On the road carved out by this patriotic advanced guard – whose commitment led to the victory of 1959 – the meaning of Fidel grew, task after task, success after success, and the sowing of one set of ideals after another.

The cult of Martí’s memory included busts and other iconographic symbols being scattered around – in the midst of a dominant political reality that was rejecting him. They served to stake out the permanence of his legacy, just as did dissemination of his written work and teaching based on his ideas. After more than half a century, that heritage was fulfilled; at that stage it took on socialist ideals. As his death approached, Fidel made good on an idea he had had throughout his a life as leader: he asked that his name not be used for institutions, or for any site in the country.

Summits against death

The people, on the correct road, remain loyal to his example and are continuing the work he enriched and left stamped with his greatness, which is as unequaled as it is paradigmatic. “Fidel is Fidel,” they’ve said, just as it’s also reasonable to say, “Martí is Martí.” They will keep his legacy alive along with that of the Maestro. In revolutionary Cuba it’s a question of, having begun, now making good on that hard work, so that future generations won’t have to rebel in order to keep from dying.

It would be absurd to substitute our understanding of such continuity with a fixation on choosing an individual champion, like in a boxing ring, while ignoring differences among epochs and the extraordinary qualities that converted both men into the high points of inspiration that they are. Perhaps Fidel, who, like Martí, embodied a seer’s capacity of glimpsing into the future, also wanted to warn against enthusiasm and excess – on the way or already here. They might lead to senseless, even pathetic, over-saturation. That could be the case with the suggestion made by a Cuban publicity specialist reporting from the Plaza of the Revolution — named for Jose Martí — for a television broadcaster friend of ours.

His news story was about the emotionally charged multitude paying tribute to Fidel after his death – and by extension to the Martí that was giving historical and moral protection to an event of such profound justice. According to his strange suggestion, it’s now time to re-baptize the Plaza with the name of the recently deceased leader.

Both of them are living there in that plaza. It will continue to honor the name and image of Martí. But Fidel is also present. Together with the people, he led unforgettable chapters there in the revolutionary life of the nation. They will live along with all good things that are done in the homeland. The embrace with which Fidel assumed the legacy of the Maestro unites them. Martí’s mortal remains are now close by Fidel’s; they take care of them.

They will both continue calling upon the people to neither forget nor betray their history, to neither leave off nor weaken in defending justice, equity, independence, and sovereignty, and, lastly, to not succumb to economic temptations, to soulless prosperity. (1) In order that what they are asking for – and will be asking for – does come to pass, they will unavoidably be keeping the flags of anti-imperialism high. The two of them enriched that cause as a fundamental duty and with a constancy that leads us to

repeat one more time Martí's well-known belief that, "When the work of one's life has been well fulfilled, then he or she really hasn't died."

1. Translator's note: "Economicistic" differs from "economic." According to Wikipedia, *economism* is "the reduction of all social facts to economic dimensions. The term is often used to criticize economics as an ideology, in which supply and demand are the only important factors in decisions, and outstrip or permit ignoring all other factors."

José Martí y el abrazo de Fidel Castro

Por Luis Toledo Sande, 27 enero, 2017

¿He de decir a usted cuánto propósito soberbio, cuánto arranque potente hiere en mi alma? ¿que llevo mi infeliz pueblo en mi cabeza, y que me parece que de un soplo mío dependerá en un día su libertad?"
(Carta de Martí a Manuel Mercado, 6 de julio de 1878.)

Lector voraz como José Martí, Fidel Castro pudo haber escrito de sí palabras con que el primero se autocaracterizó: "Napoleón nació sobre una alfombra donde estaba la guerra de Europa. // Yo debí nacer sobre una pila de libros". Pero el propio Martí plasmó en otro apunte una confesión que complementa la citada y es igualmente aplicable a Fidel: "el libro que más me interesa es el de la vida, que es también el más difícil de leer, y el que más se ha de consultar en todo lo que se refiere a la política, que al fin y al cabo es el arte de asegurar al hombre el goce de sus facultades naturales en el bienestar de la existencia".

De no haber seguido ambos esa guía, habrían incurrido en un vacío esterilizante para el pensamiento y la acción: esperar hasta ver si de las metrópolis del mundo les llegaban las respuestas necesarias para interpretar y enfrentar los graves problemas que ellos se plantearon resolver creativamente. Eran desafíos que no se limitaban a Cuba: les llegarían asimismo de nuestra América, de la del Norte y aun del resto del planeta, y ambos fraguaron una guía contra el colonialismo cultural, viniera este de donde viniera, o –pensemos en hoy– venga de donde venga.

El camino para valorar con acierto la presencia en Fidel del hombre a quien él llamó "el más genial y el más universal de los políticos cubanos", y "guía eterno de nuestro pueblo", no se halla en buscar coincidencias de temperamentos –tema que desborda este artículo–, y menos aún en hacer meros cotejos textuales. De esto último se percató el articulista al hacer la selección y escribir el prólogo –los dos con firma institucional del Centro de Estudios Martianos– del volumen de páginas de Fidel titulado *José Martí, el autor intelectual* (1983).

Inmenso fue el abono textual en los actos de Martí y de Fidel, y en la imantación del primero sobre el segundo; pero un modo seguro para valorar la relación entre ellos no lo dará el criterio –de punta hegeliana– encallado en considerar que las ideas vienen no más de las ideas. Ambos fueron conscientes de la dignidad de estas, y de su valor para iluminar la práctica, pero sabían que sus raíces determinantes se hallan en el subsuelo de la realidad.

Ese hecho debe tenerse en cuenta al ponderar por qué Fidel declaró a Martí autor intelectual de los sucesos del 26 de julio de 1953, y en consecuencia –vale añadir– de la etapa revolucionaria que, desatada entonces, llega al presente y continúa viva hacia el futuro. Quien, como había hecho su predecesor en 1874 –aunque no obtuvo el título por falta de dinero para el pago establecido–, en 1950 se graduó de abogado, asumió su autodefensa cuando se le juzgó por aquellos acontecimientos, que él había encabezado. De algún modo eso recuerda al adolescente que en 1869 se irguió contra las autoridades colonialistas en el juicio en que se le impuso prisión y trabajo forzado.

En su alegato Fidel ratificó lo que había dicho en interrogatorios previos: Martí era el mentor de aquella acción revolucionaria. Pero no sentaba con tal declaración, ni con las páginas que citó o glosó del Apóstol, una mera estrategia discursiva para valerse del prestigio de su palabra. Apuntaba a los propósitos de la acción.

Metas heredadas

Protagonizada por combatientes de distintas partes del país, y con la actualización de miras necesaria entonces, la gesta buscaba abrirle camino de realización a lo que no le fue dado al proyecto Martiano consumar. Para ello el líder que crecía acometió en los escritos –en las ideas– de Martí una búsqueda de la cual dejó huellas en el ejemplar de sus *Obras completas* que leyó en la cárcel con pasión apreciable en subrayados y anotaciones.

En acto de justicia histórica, ese lector pudo proclamar que los hechos de 1953, cuando se había celebrado el centenario del Apóstol, se habían concebido y llevado a cabo para impedir que él muriese de tanta negación sufrida por su legado. Aquel régimen era un instrumento de la potencia imperialista, ya en apogeo, que en 1898, cuando aún se consolidaba, perpetró planes que Martí quiso impedir a tiempo: consistían en apoderarse de Cuba y de Puerto Rico para, con esa fuerza más, dominar a nuestra América toda, y empezar a dislocar el equilibrio del mundo hasta convertirse en nación hegemónica.

Sin enfrentar semejante realidad sería imposible acometer a fondo el saneamiento de la República implantada en 1902, medularmente contraria a la república moral por la que luchó Martí. Esta, que no era una lección liquidada en el siglo XIX, merecía y debía retomarse como raíz de la Cuba revolucionaria, llamada a erigirse sobre bases republicanas nuevas y erradicar la herencia de la colonia y la presencia del neocolonialismo.

Al conmemorar, 20 años después, los ígneos sucesos de 1953, Fidel será particularmente explícito al decir: “Martí nos enseñó su ardiente patriotismo, su amor apasionado a la libertad, la dignidad y el decoro del hombre, su repudio al despotismo y su fe ilimitada en el pueblo. En su predica revolucionaria estaba el fundamento moral y la legitimidad histórica de nuestra acción armada. Por eso dijimos que él fue el autor intelectual del 26 de Julio”. Y en el camino trazado por Martí se empinó en 1976 la República socialista fundada con la guía de Fidel y cuya Constitución la preside esta aspiración Martiana: “que la ley primera de la república sea el culto de los cubanos a la dignidad plena del hombre”.

En El tercer año del *Partido Revolucionario Cubano*, artículo publicado en Patria el 17 de abril de 1894 y subtitulado *El alma de la Revolución, y el deber de Cuba en América*, Martí estampó lo que significaba la independencia de Cuba para toda nuestra América y para asegurar el equilibrio mundial. Por ello sostuvo: “Quien se levanta hoy con Cuba se levanta para todos los tiempos”.

Esa idea –validada por la historia– la desarrolló en varios textos, como el *Manifiesto de Montecristi*. En este, fechado 25 de marzo de 1895, a la guerra iniciada el 24 del mes anterior la llamó “suceso de gran alcance humano y servicio oportuno que el heroísmo juicioso de las Antillas presta a la firmeza y trato justo de las naciones americanas, y al equilibrio aún vacilante del mundo”. En la misma fecha, sabiéndose “en el pórtico de un gran deber” –pues marchaba a ocupar su lugar en la contienda de liberación nacional que él había preparado–, le escribió al amigo dominicano Federico Henríquez y Carvajal la carta donde ratificó sus propósitos, y aseguró: “Yo alzaré el mundo”.

Palabras, ideas, hechos

Sin asomo de vanidad, expresaba así un optimismo que hace pensar en el de Fidel cuando, tras la dispersión causada en la tropa expedicionaria por el revés militar del desembarco del yate *Granma*, se vio rodeado de un exiguo grupo de compañeros con escasos pertrechos, y exclamó: “¡Ahora sí ganamos la guerra!”.

Martí expresaba la convicción que, declarada desde años atrás, ratificaría también el día antes de caer en combate, en otra carta testamentaria, la dirigida a su amigo mexicano Manuel Mercado: urgía impedir que se hicieran realidad los planes expansionistas de los Estados Unidos, y contra ellos enfilaba él sus actos, como le confesó a Mercado: “Cuanto hice hasta hoy, y haré, es para eso”, aunque en lo visible se combatía contra el ejército español.

Esa senda de alcance planetario la tomó también el Fidel que, en la Sierra Maestra, reaccionó ante la destrucción de la casa de un campesino por una bomba estadounidense lanzada desde un avión de la tiranía. Entonces el líder rebelde le hizo a una compañera de lucha, Celia Sánchez, la confesión que no sería simple impulso emocional, sino todo un programa. Una vez lograda la victoria contra la tiranía, se dedicaría a lo que fue central en sus actos y en sus ideas, hasta su muerte: luchar contra el imperialismo.

Esa actitud era necesaria para poner a la patria en camino de erradicar la miseria que la mayoría del pueblo sufrió, y crear las condiciones para el desarrollo educacional y las conquistas culturales que se insertaran definitivamente en el rumbo trazado por Martí: “Ser culto es el único modo de ser libre”. Tan sembrador concepto

ubicaba lo cultural en una dimensión inseparable del libro y la lectura, pero irreductible a lo libresco academicista, y que requería ejercer el pensamiento propio.

No hay que asombrarse, pues, de que en la aludida autodefensa de Fidel en el juicio que se le aplicó en 1953 se halle, mucho más que citas de Martí, una manera de ver la realidad por sus ojos, y sin nubes pasatistas contrarias a la capacidad de germinación del legado Martiano. Sobre tales bases, el 29 de mayo de 1955, desde las páginas de **BOHEMIA**, al desmentir falsoedades de un esbirro sanguinario, afirmó: “es el Apóstol el guía de mi vida”. Para abrazar la herencia de Martí, su más logrado discípulo y continuador no se contentó con hallar en sus textos una fuente de aforismos elegantes, sino –homenaje raigal si los hay– una brújula para la vida.

La frase que da título al alegato, *La historia me absolverá*, remite al discurso que Martí pronunció el 17 de febrero de 1892 y se conoce como *La oración de Tampa y Cayo Hueso*. Con la convicción ética sobre lo que se hace, terminó refiriéndose a la labor unitaria que llevaría a fundar el Partido Revolucionario Cubano: “[...] la historia no nos ha de declarar culpables!”. En el alegato, donde Fidel insistió en cuán costoso habría sido para el pueblo cubano dejar morir a su Apóstol, la huella de este es tan omnipresente que el mejor modo de mostrarla es reproducir todo el texto.

Ante un apoteísmo del peso de “primero se hundirá la isla en el mar antes que consintamos en ser esclavos de nadie”, ¿cómo no recordar la terminación del discurso de Martí en el Steck Hall neoyorquino el 24 de enero de 1880? Allí el orador sentenció: “¡Antes que cejar en el empeño de hacer libre y próspera a la patria, se unirá el mar del Sur al mar del Norte, y nacerá una serpiente de un huevo de águila!” También sostuvo: “Ignoran los déspotas que el pueblo, la masa adolorida, es el verdadero jefe de las revoluciones”, idea que se siente en la base del concepto de pueblo sustentado en *La historia me absolverá*.

Memoria del corazón

Así de orgánico fue, es, el abrazo de Fidel a Martí. En español la etimología del verbo *recordar* habla de *lo que se vuelve a traer al corazón* –como no solo en sentido figurado concierne a ese órgano el vocablo *cordial*–, y en otras lenguas *aprender de memoria* se dice *aprender de corazón*. Tal es la manera como procede entender la asunción de textos Martianos por Fidel.

A lo visto con respecto a *La oración de Tampa y Cayo Hueso* y *La historia me absolverá*, añádase, entre otros posibles ejemplos, el pasaje de la carta del 15 de diciembre de 1893 en que Martí le dice a Antonio Maceo: “Yo no trabajo por mi fama, puesto que toda la del mundo cabe en un grano de maíz”. Esa declaración la condensó Fidel en una máxima que ha recorrido el planeta: “Toda la gloria del mundo cabe en un grano de maíz”. Martí habló de la fama, y su discípulo, que alcanzó el poder y siempre se manifestó dispuesto a mantener a raya el asedio de la gloria, hizo de aquel texto una apropiación que rebasa el plano lexical.

Toda recreación legítima y de altura ofrece destellos sugerentes. El líder de la Revolución Cubana, refiriéndose al heroísmo de su pueblo, años después del triunfo de 1959, en medio de la brutal hostilidad imperialista, dijo que no solamente merecía la victoria y un sitio en la historia, sino también “un lugar en la gloria”. Al replantear aforísticamente lo dicho por Martí a Maceo subrayó, acaso sin proponérselo, el valor de lo elemental natural. A una eminentemente estudiosa de Martí, iluminada por el patriotismo y la poesía, le oyó el autor de este artículo decir al respecto: “Eso habla de lo grandes que son la humildad y un grano de maíz”.

El culto a la humildad por parte de Martí y de Fidel es el propio de los seres extraordinarios, no la resignación a la intrascendencia. Alguien como Martí puede sostener lo que, dicho sin su grandeza, puede parar en la injusticia y la ingratitud: “Nada es un hombre en sí, y lo que es, lo pone en él su pueblo. En vano concede la Naturaleza a algunos de sus hijos cualidades privilegiadas; porque serán polvo y azote si no se hacen carne de su pueblo, mientras que si van con él, y le sirven de brazo y de voz, por él se verán encumbrados, como las flores que lleva en su cima una montaña”.

El pueblo solamente puede depositar la energía propia de la grandeza, y una confianza a esa altura, en quienes tengan fuerza para cargar con ellas. Tal relación entre individualidad y colectivo, entre líder y pueblo, explica la permanencia de Martí en la memoria y en la querencia de la patria, y la capacidad de Fidel para abrazar esa lección y darle continuidad fecundante en un camino donde ambos fijaron la estrella de su impronta personal.

Un logro de semejante envergadura sería impensable sin el talento que ambos tuvieron, y sin el valor que supieron dar a la unidad revolucionaria, fomentada por ellos con la autoridad moral de su entrega a la lucha con una actitud que recuerda la citada carta de Martí a Henríquez y Carvajal: “hay que dar respeto y sentido humano y amable, al sacrificio”.

En él, ese logro lo corroboró su capacidad de supervivencia tras la muerte, capacidad que se consumó por su propio poder de irradiación, por el empeño de luchadores lúcidos que retomaron su legado y por el fervor que merecidamente generó en el pueblo. Así la herencia patriótica y revolucionaria de quien en el presidio pasó “sereno entre los viles” se mantuvo incorruptible en medio del cieno de la República neocolonial.

De luz en luz

Asimismo el legado del líder de la etapa de luchas conocida por antonomasia como Revolución Cubana vivirá por encima de su muerte. Si brilló de un modo especial –recordemos palabras de Ernesto Che Guevara– en “los días luminosos y tristes de la crisis del Caribe”, desde la noche del 25 de noviembre de 2016 le ha dado a la patria días tristes, por las dimensiones de la pérdida, pero también luminosos, por las reservas de potencialidad patriótica y revolucionaria que el pueblo ratificó ante su partida.

Al definir en Patria la naturaleza de la revolución que se gestaba para independizar y sanear el país, Martí expresó confianza en el pueblo. Lo hizo con la certidumbre que le proporcionaba comprobar que a los patriotas residentes en el país y a los que, como él, habían tenido que emigrar los unían ideales y acción.

Con esa luz apreció que en todos primaba la voluntad de servir a la patria: “Viles tenemos, pero más grandes que viles. Habrá un humilde para cada soberbio: seremos ala de aquella otra ala. Y con dos alas, volaremos mejor. No somos hombres aquí: somos amigos del hombre. No somos pasiones aquí: somos pabilo que se consume para que nuestro pueblo luzca: alfombra somos, para que pise nuestro pueblo”.

Tal era la tesisura de quien echaba su suerte “con los pobres de la tierra”, y así preludió la que Fidel definiría como revolución “de los humildes, por los humildes y para los humildes”. Ni uno ni otro serían bien vistos por quienes aspirasen a perpetuarse sentados sobre las espaldas del pueblo, y que, por tanto, servirían al amo, yanqui o español –como escribe Martí a Mercado en su carta póstuma–, que les asegurase tal privilegio.

En esa carta, refiriéndose al eventual destino que pudiera asignarle la asamblea de representantes del pueblo insurrecto –aunque difícilmente se le hubiera confiado a otro, viviendo él, la guía de la República en armas–, afirmó: “Sé desaparecer. Pero no desaparecería mi pensamiento, ni me agriaría mi oscuridad”. Pensaba en la posible oscuridad del destino aludido, no en la suya, pues no la había en él. Hombre luz, añadió: “Y en cuanto tengamos forma, obraremos, cúmplame esto a mí, o a otros”.

Tras contingencias y tragedias históricas –en las cuales sobresalió su propia muerte en combate– fue necesario esperar a que, sobre la base de lo braceado después de la tragedia de Dos Ríos, la generación del centenario Martiano, vanguardia conducida por Fidel, obrase para hacer realidad los planes del Maestro. En el camino labrado por esa avanzada patriótica –cuyo empeño condujo a la victoria de 1959– creció, afán tras afán, siembra tras siembra de ideales, logro tras logro, la significación de Fidel.

El culto a la memoria de Martí incluyó la disseminación de bustos y otros recursos iconográficos que –en medio de la realidad política dominante, que lo negaba– jalonaron la permanencia de su legado junto a la difusión de su obra escrita y a la prédica basada en sus ideas. Tras más de medio siglo de consumación de esa herencia a la altura de tiempos signados por ideales socialistas, Fidel coronó en vísperas de su muerte una idea que mantuvo a lo largo de su vida como líder: pidió que no se diera su nombre a instituciones, a sitio alguno del país.

Cimas contra la muerte

Con lealtad a su ejemplo, continuando por el camino correcto la obra que él abonó y dejó marcada por su grandeza –tan inimitable como paradigmática: *Fidel es Fidel*, se ha dicho, como también es justo decir *Martí es Martí*–, podrá el pueblo mantener vivo su legado junto al del Maestro. En la Cuba revolucionaria es cuestión de haber empezado ya a cumplir ese afán, para que generaciones futuras no tengan que levantarse con el fin de impedir que ellos mueran.

Sería absurdo sustituir el entendimiento de tal continuidad por el afán de escoger, como en un cuadrilátero de boxeo, a un triunfador individual, ignorando las diferencias de épocas y las calidades extraordinarias que hacen de ambos las cimas singulares que son. Tal vez Fidel, quien, como Martí, encarnó la capacidad zahorí de vislumbrar el futuro, quiso también prevenir que el entusiasmo y la falta de mesura –el no llegar o pasarse– condujeran a sobresaturaciones vaciadoras de sentido, cuando no patéticas.

Tal pudiera ser el caso de la sugerencia hecha por un profesional cubano de la información mientras reportaba para una televisora amiga, desde la Plaza de la Revolución José Martí, el tributo póstumo que allí la multitud conmovida rendía a Fidel y, por extensión, al Martí que daba cobijo histórico y moral a un acto de tan entrañable justicia. Según la peregrina sugerencia aludida, cabía rebautizar la Plaza con el nombre del líder recién fallecido.

En esa Plaza, que seguirá honrándose con el nombre y la imagen de Martí, y con la presencia del Fidel que allí protagonizó junto al pueblo imborrables capítulos de la vida revolucionaria de la nación, ambos viven, y vivirán como en todo lo bueno que se haga en la patria. Los une el abrazo con que asumió Fidel el legado del Maestro, cuyos restos mortales ya los suyos acompañan de cerca: los custodian.

Ambos seguirán convocando al pueblo a no olvidar ni traicionar su historia, a no cesar ni flaquear en la defensa de la justicia, de la equidad, de la independencia y la soberanía, a no sucumbir a tentaciones economicistas, a la prosperidad sin alma. Para cumplir el llamado que ellos hacen y harán será insoslayable mantener en alto las banderas del antimperialismo que los dos abonaron como deber fundamental y con una entereza que autoriza a repetir una vez más esta conocida convicción de Martí: "La muerte no es verdad cuando se ha cumplido bien la obra de la vida".