

The patriotism of Camilo Cienfuegos

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by Marta Denis Valle

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In October of the same year he aborted a counterrevolutionary outbreak in Camagüey. On the 21st Camilo Cienfuegos, accompanied by the people, marched bare-chested to ward off the conspiracy of Hubert Matos, head of the Agramonte II regiment.

I, as head of the Rebel Army, assume command in Camagüey and I arrest you for being a traitor, he told him.

Before the people of Camagüey, he affirmed: "...Because it is good that all the comrades know that this Revolution will not be stopped by anything or anyone... with this Revolution we are going to achieve social justice, to get the peasants and workers out of the misery in which the counterrevolutionary interests have them subjected".

After reorganizing the rebel forces in that city, on October 25 he returned to Havana and the following day he delivered his last speech in the old Presidential Palace, before a public rally in support of the Revolution.

To stop this Cuban Revolution, he said with great emotion, an entire people would have to die and "...if this were to happen, the verses of Bonifacio Byrne would come true: ...If it is torn into small pieces/it becomes my flag someday/our dead, raising their arms/will still know how to defend it".

On the night of October 28, 1959 an irreparable event happened; Camilo, who faced danger dozens of times, disappeared on board of the small Cessna plane coming from Camagüey, traveling again to Havana.

His departure during a strong storm took place on the occasion of fulfilling his duty to be in the capital, stalked by the counterrevolutionary enemy.

Expeditionary of the Granma yacht and guerrilla commander, Camilo Cienfuegos left forever an indelible mark in the collective memory of this people that pays tribute to him with flowers on each anniversary of the date of his death.

IN THE VANGUARD

The last to join the expeditionaries in Mexico, he was part of the initial rebel group and Column Number 1, led by Commander in Chief Fidel Castro, in the Sierra Maestra, and soon stood out in the vanguard of the Rebel Army.

In the first year of the guerrilla, he went through the path from soldier to captain and Che Guevara would baptize him "lord of the vanguard".

The then captain Camilo Cienfuegos, chief of the first platoon that operated outside the mountains, in the eastern plain in a triangle between Las Tunas, Holguin and Bayamo, fulfilled the mission of fighting without truce against the Batista soldiers for 53 days; on April 16 he received the promotion to commander.

A good number of Cubans learned of his exploits in the Sierra and the plains through the clandestine Radio Rebelde and word-of-mouth rumors in the last year of the revolutionary war (1958); in only 10 months of 1959, the fame of the bearded guerrilla fighter took over all the scenarios and his legend was imposed towards immortality.

At the head of the Antonio Maceo Column No. 2, he led the invasion and rebel campaign in Las Villas, as did Commander Ernesto Che Guevara, with No. 8 Ciro Redondo, in the last months of the revolutionary war.

His forces triumphantly entered Havana and occupied on January 2, 1959, the Columbia Military Camp, the main fortress of the tyranny, which paralyzed a coup attempt by elements of the old regime.

With his distinctive hat, long beard and hair, Commander Cienfuegos conquered everyone with the famous question "Am I doing well, Camilo?" of the Commander in Chief of the Rebel Army Fidel Castro, when he addressed the people on January 8, 1959, hours after his entry into Havana.

He was Chief of Staff of the Rebel Army from January 21 and on February 18 he disbanded the repressive bodies of Fulgencio Batista's tyranny.

On the morning of July 26, 1959, Camilo entered Havana at the head of a symbolic invading cavalry that left from Yaguayay, coinciding with a great peasant concentration in the capital, in support of the Agrarian Reform Law.

And on September 14, he handed over to the Ministry of Education the fortress of Colombia, the country's main fortress, which was transformed into the Ciudad Escolar Libertad (Freedom School City).

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