

45 years without our young people from Barbados

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By Víctor Joaquín Ortega

Havana, October 6 (RHC)-- The pain has multiplied, as Fidel said, in the mourning farewell of the Barbados Martyrs. October 15, 1976: the Plaza de la Revolución has been filled with tears, a continuation of those that furrowed the faces when the sad truth was made known. Also of courage, of battles, of standing upright in the face of the perverse.

I have had to overcome external and internal tears -the most lacerating- to be able to write about my comrades murdered in a mid-flight sabotage of a Cubana plane on the 6th of October, 45 years ago.

I interviewed several of those fencers shortly after a victory or in the bitterness of a setback. I tried to elevate them in the poetics of a chronicle, I delved into their skills, I clarified their perspectives... Now I will never be able to see them again... They no longer exist! I have to overcome sadness. Rather, I must place it on the pages: each word is a weapon against evil.

Fidel pointed out at the closing ceremony: "Our athletes, sacrificed in the prime of their lives and their faculties, will be eternal champions in our hearts. Their gold medals will not lie at the bottom of the ocean: they already rise as suns without stains and as symbols in the firmament of Cuba. They will not reach the honor of the Olympics, but they have ascended forever to the beautiful Olympus of the martyrs of the homeland."

And he warned: "Millions of Cubans weep today with the loved ones of the victims of the abominable crime of Barbados. And when an energetic and virile people weep, injustice trembles...".

I must overcome any softness. As Martí said: lamentation is for the wretched -- and he showed us how to carry it into combat so as not to remain in wretchedness. So, to write based on what I learned during my stay as a war correspondent in the land of Uncle Ho: pain, hatred, must be converted into concrete actions against the enemy.

This is how one of the Vietnamese soldiers summed it up to me during my visit to the burn ward of Saint Paul Hospital, where one of his relatives was struggling between life and death, injured by napalm while pulling on a tree. There was a bomb disguised as a doll dropped by a Phantom. I'm going...

They are the same hands. The ones that assassinated Julio Antonio Mella on the corner of Abraham Gonzalez and Morelos. The ones that riddled Pablo de la Torriente Brau's chest in Majadahonda. The ones that forced Rubén Martínez Villena to give up his lungs. The ones that forced Guiteras and Aponte to make history in El Morrillo. The ones that shot Jesús Menéndez in the back. The ones that left us without José Antonio Echeverría. The ones that gouged out the eyes of Abel Santamaría. Those who shot Marcelo Salado. The ones that disappeared Fulgencio Oroz. Those that turned the steamship La Coubre into a catastrophe. The ones that invaded through Girón (the Bay of Pigs). Those that took the lives of Manuel Ascunce, Conrado Benítez and Pedro Lantigua... Those that stole territories from Mexico. Those who betrayed Sandino. Those who carried out the Son My massacre. Those who created special bombs against the Vietnamese. Those who killed Rigoberto López Pérez, Anastasio Somoza's executioner. Those who intervened in Cuba, Haiti, Santo Domingo, Nicaragua... Those who killed President Allende. Those who killed Amílcar Cabral. Those who tried to subjugate Angola again. Those who thought they could destroy Che in that little school.

They are the same hands and they belong to capitalism. They are the same hands, heirs of the same ignominy. They are the hands of the gringos who organized the attack on the Cubana plane in mid-flight.

Our tears turned into hatred against the enemy, translated into actions for a more just and beautiful world. It is not only to feel and say that we are willing to fight, it is to try to be better in our daily trench, in our daily heroism, in the fulfillment of our duty.

Higher quality and productivity in fishing and drawing, in cane and chronicle, in construction and poem, in shoes and films. The Martyrs of Barbados drive.

Better training of the soldier. Correct use of the studies. Stronger struggle to achieve an ever more revolutionary, more dignified, more socialist and internationalist homeland. The martyrs of Barbados give impetus. Nor should the athlete falter in his training or competitions.

Nearing my 80 years of age, I feel truly sorry for those who do not know the realities of our history and play the game of the gringada. There is no virtue there, there is none.

Soon it will be 45 years since the assassination of our fencers and other worthy and unforgettable Cubans. Their example, their shed blood, does not deserve to be forgotten. They have to keep pushing forward.

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