

The epic of Granma, or the bulwark of national defense

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Anniversary of the landing of the Granma and the Revolutionary Armed Forces. Image: MC

by Mailenys Oliva Ferrales

There is so much symbolism in that memorable dawn in which a random landing became an epic of youthful courage, that history summons us, every year, to recall the date of December 2, 1956 as one of the inescapable references on which the epic resistance of the Cuban people is based.

How not to shudder then when reviewing the tortuous road -among mangroves, swamps and thick stretches of roots and broken trunks- that the 82 expedition members of the Granma yacht had to travel for two hours before stepping on dry land with sores on their feet, wounds on their bodies and the threat of enemy aircraft over their heads.

How not to be amazed at the enormous will of those young revolutionaries who, led by Fidel, came determined to "be free or martyrs", because the outraged Homeland was anxiously awaiting another war cry that would rekindle the libertarian flame of Céspedes, Maceo, Gómez, Martí and Mella.

How not to revere the heroes of that heroic deed, who only three days after the landing had their baptism of fire in Alegría de Pío, with a painful toll of three fallen combatants, the fracture of the column, and the dispersion of the revolutionaries, some of whom were victims of the manhunt unleashed by Batista's army.

But that setback would not break the fighting spirit of that group of incipient rebels, whose pledge was the promise of a possible future of independence and sovereignty for Cuba.

Cinco Palmas would later reaffirm it in that intimate reunion between Fidel and Raul, marked by the full conviction of victory, although at that moment they only had eight men and seven rifles. The leader would euphorically predict: "Now we have won the war!"

Thus, the country's hope began to be painted olive green. Thus was born the Rebel Army which, two years later, would overthrow the tyranny and initiate social changes in which national defense would have a single doctrine: the war of all the people, with the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) in the first trench.

Since then, that army born of the people itself has been an indispensable bulwark for the nation, not only in the combative preparation of the country and in the development of successful internationalist missions, but also in the thrust of every step of the Revolution in which its contributions have been required.

There are the men and women in uniform who joined the battle against COVID-19; those who did not hesitate to produce and transport medical oxygen when the country needed it most; those who put their chest out to help face the fire at the Matanzas supertanker base; or those who recently went to raise a province hit by the force of a hurricane like Ian.

Implicit in this immense work of the FAR is the altruistic and emancipating heritage that disembarked with the expeditionaries of the Granma yacht, 66 years ago today.

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