

*Rectify the press to rectify our
society*

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Speech delivered by Ricardo Ronquillo Bello, president of UPEC, at the organization's 60th anniversary event on July 14, 2023.

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We can almost imagine the turmoil of a day like today, 60 years ago, on the eve of what was then recognized as the national assembly of constitution of the Union of Journalists of Cuba.

It is possible this afternoon, and from this theater, to surmise the atmosphere of expectation and jubilation of the 277 summoned to the Sierra Maestra Hall of the Habana Libre Hotel, which fitted perfectly into the political atmosphere of that time in the country.

Four years earlier, the Revolution -as surprising as it was radical- changed the course of all compasses and set the horizon on a political, economic, moral and spiritual change that broke the borders of the country to subjugate the loves and ardors of the continent and the planet.

A decadent world was coming down, which in stages was becoming tyrannical, against which a decorous Marti's generation had risen with the assaults of July 26, 1953 as Antillean Thermopylae. Everything was to be founded, even the unity of the revolutionary vanguards that, for the first time, triumphed so resoundingly in Cuba.

It was not until that July 15, when the workers of the press gathered - or came together to put it more precisely and preciously - to climb to very high peaks of social and political responsibility, that a tame stream was navigated.

On that date, not only was born an absolutely new organization by its nature in the continent, as Ernesto Vera, artisan of the constitutive act and one of our presidents, emphasized, but also the dream of founding a different type of journalism was proposed: one in which the workers stopped serving the profit of those above to defend the rights of those below, of that "suffering" mass that Fidel had vindicated in his plea History will absolve me.

The great rebellion began when the owners of the capitalist mass media saw the famous "little tail" nailed to the cheek of their much-talked-about freedom of the press. The flag of their former salaried employees was now sticking them.

Thus began, with that providential singularity of our insurrections, the beginning of the socialization of the private media in Cuba. Since then, freedom of the press in this country would begin to have another meaning; that which many years later the lucidity of the master Julio García Luis would define as the right of the organized society to have media, which could not be other than the right of the people to own them in order to express themselves in freedom.

The history of the Union of Journalists of Cuba is an inseparable part of the struggles of the Cuban people, from these struggles it was born and to these it owes its existence. It is impossible to speak of the history of this land, of the emergence of a national, patriotic and social justice conscience, without referring to the history of journalism and its highest representatives.

We are heirs of a tradition that began with Father Felix Varela and continued, in honorable succession, with the Apostle, Juan Gualberto Gomez, Julio Antonio Mella, Pablo de la Torriente Brau, Ernesto Guevara and Fidel Castro.

That is why Tubal Paez Hernandez, honorary president of our Upec, is right in clarifying that journalists do not accompany the Revolution, journalists are also the Revolution. This alone explains the sacrifices that, together with the people, and for the sake of their cause, they face on their behalf.

In addition to its chroniclers, defenders of its truth, its moral and ethical cleanliness, they have been and are its makers, from the founding days to these times of readjustment and rectification. To change everything that has to be changed, as Fidel defended, so that the Revolution is not changed, in the sense in which its historical leader warned from the Aula Magna of the University of Havana.

In the search for a new journalism, such as the one proposed by the constituents of our Upec, the Revolution had major successes -otherwise it would not exist in the face of the machinery of hatred and manipulation that tried all the baseness against it- but also not minuscule mistakes and distortions.

Some of these errors were pointed out in the last Party congresses, as a demonstration of the growing awareness that it would not be possible to advance towards a fuller, more democratic and irreversible socialism without changing our journalism. With great success, the V Congress of the UPEC, in 1985, was convened with the phrase: "Without rectification in the press, there is no rectification in society".

The new journalism that the founders gave us as golden is still an unfinished cause against secrecy, the need to promote transparency and accountability in public management, debate and socially sanitizing criticism, which should have their natural environment in socialism.

Fidel, who would ask us and made us feel it as one of us, always considered that error is preferable to silence in the Revolution. The dumbness, the emptiness of our positions, the paralyzing, accommodating and demobilizing triumphalism or the empty propaganda, without connection with the complexity of real life, is the best gift we can give today to the neocolonizing narrative against Cuba.

The condition of fundamental media, so rightly included in the third Constitution of the socialist period, is not only given by right in a networked society, with more than seven million Internet users as the Cuban one is already. It is necessary to fight every second in an unprecedented symbolic contest with instantaneousness, depth, beauty, stylistic and discursive modernity, science and conscience. To get rid of any ballast of the past, we now have the Communication Policy of the State and the Government; with communication conceived as one of the strategic axes of government management; with the Social Communication Law and the promotion of an experiment to change the editorial, economic and technological management models of our media. These are the political, institutional and legal instruments to advance towards a new model of communication and public press for our socialism.

The above are transformations that the people demand from our journalism in the midst of the pressures of this change of epoch and of an inclement cognitive war, with communication as the center of the escalation. We have no right to fail ourselves, nor to fail those people, or those who in the continent and in the world, such as those who make up the Latin American Federation of Journalists, or those who in the last two years participated in the Patria International Colloquium, continue to have in Cuba a reference point of agreement, of unrenounceable quests and utopia. The world and the country are different, the scale of the challenges has changed, we owe ourselves many answers to disturbing questions, but sixty years after that July 15, 1963, with the Revolution in power and us with it, what cannot change is the energy, the commitment and the hope of our founders. That is the guarantee of our Union in the era of fragmentation.

Long live Cuban journalists!

Long live the Revolution that unites us!

Long live the ethics, dignity, sense of justice and patriotism that distinguish the Union of Cuban Journalists!

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