

## Why Has Cuba Become a Difficult Problem for the Left?

by

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*Both Cuba and the left—the set of transformative theories and practices that has resisted the expansion of capitalism and the economic, social, political, and cultural relations it has generated—have evolved considerably in the past half century, and the fact that they have evolved in disparate ways has created a difficult problem. Under the current internal conditions, Cuba is no longer a viable solution for the left. The problems it faces, while not insurmountable, will be very difficult to solve. If they are solved within a socialist framework, however, Cuba will be a different Cuba, bringing about a different kind of socialism from the one that failed in the twentieth century and thereby contributing to a renovation of the left that is urgently needed. To bring to fulfillment the ferment of transformation contained in its current political moment, Cuba will need the solidarity of left individuals, organizations, and movements worldwide.*

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The question why Cuba has become a difficult problem for the left may sound strange. Many may think that the inverse would make more sense: Why has the left become a difficult problem for Cuba? There is no question but that the role of the Cuban Revolution in the theory and praxis of the left throughout the twentieth century is unparalleled—all the more so the less one focuses on Cuban society itself and the more one focuses on Cuba's contribution to international relations, namely, the numerous demonstrations of internationalist solidarity provided by the Cuban Revolution over the past 50 years. Europe and North America might well have become what they are today regardless of the Cuban Revolution, but the same cannot be said of Latin America, Africa, and Asia, the regions of the planet where 85 percent of the world's population live. In the course of five decades, international solidarity, of which Cuba has been the great protagonist, has extended into the most diverse domains—political, military, social, and humanitarian.

The question I am trying to answer here does seem to me to make sense, but before I attempt an answer some clarifications are in order. First, the question may appear to suggest that only Cuba has evolved and become problematic, whereas the left is still the same as it was 50 years ago. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Both Cuba and the left have evolved considerably during this half century, and the difficult problem has in fact emerged from the disparate ways in which they have done so. While it is true that Cuba has actively tried to change the international landscape with a view to fairer relations among peoples, it is likewise true that the adverse external conditions

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under which the Cuban Revolution has been forced to evolve have undermined the potential apparent in 1959 for the renovation of the left—preventing its complete fulfillment. The consequence is that for the past 50 years the world left has renovated itself not because of but despite the Cuban Revolution. Cuban international solidarity has therefore been able to remain vital, while the Cuban internal solution has languished.

Second, let me clarify what I mean by “the left” and by “a difficult problem.” By “the left” I mean a set of transformative theories and practices that, in the course of the past 150 years, has resisted the expansion of capitalism and the economic, social, political, and cultural relations it has generated. The basis for this resistance has been a belief in the possibility of a postcapitalist future and an alternative society, generally called “socialism”: a fairer society, intent on satisfying people’s real needs, and a freer society, focused on creating the conditions for the effective exercise of freedom. I submit that, for the left just described, whose theory and practice has evolved immensely in the past 50 years, Cuba has become a difficult problem. (From the point of view of the left that has eliminated socialism or postcapitalism from its framework, of course, Cuba is not a problem but a hopeless case. I am not concerned here with this version of the left.)

By “difficult problem” I mean the problem that poses itself as an alternative to two polar positions: that Cuba is a solution without problems and that Cuba is a problem without solutions. To declare Cuba a difficult problem for the left involves accepting three ideas: (1) under the current internal conditions, Cuba is no longer a viable solution for the left; (2) the problems Cuba faces, while not insurmountable, are very difficult to solve; and (3) if these problems are solved within a socialist framework, Cuba may once again become an agent for the renovation of the left. In this case, Cuba will be a different Cuba, bringing about a different kind of socialism from the one that failed in the twentieth century and thereby contributing to the urgent renovation of the left. Without such renovation, the left will never make it through the twenty-first century.

### RESISTANCE AND AN ALTERNATIVE

The first understanding of the problem may be formulated as follows: All modern revolutionary processes are processes of rupture grounded on two pillars: resistance and an alternative. Maintaining equilibrium between these two pillars is crucial for eliminating the old as much as necessary and causing the new to flourish. Given the hostile external conditions under which the Cuban revolutionary process has evolved—the illegal embargo by the United States, the inevitable Soviet solution in the 1970s, and the drastic adjustment brought about by the end of the Soviet Union in the 1990s—no such equilibrium has been possible. Resistance has ended up taking precedence over an alternative. Thus, the alternative has been unable to express itself according to its own logic (stating the new) and has been confined to the logic of resistance (negating the old). The outcome has been that the alternative has never become a true, consolidated solution capable of creating a new hegemony

and evolving internally according to a logic of renovation. As a result, the ruptures with the revolution's own successive pasts have always been less endogenous than the rupture with the prerevolutionary past.

In view of this imbalance between resistance and an alternative, the alternative has always been on the verge of stagnation. The continuity and vitality of resistance have been readily invoked to support the impossibility of an alternative, and this invocation has been credible even when factually erroneous.

### REVOLUTIONARY CHARISMA AND THE REFORMIST SYSTEM

The second understanding of the problem concerns the specifically Cuban way in which the tension between revolution and reform has developed. In any revolutionary process, the first act of the revolutionaries after the success of the revolution is to prevent any further revolution, thus giving rise to reformism within the revolution. An invisible but decisive complicity between revolution and reformism results from a duality—always more apparent than real—between the charisma of the leader (in this case Fidel), which keeps the revolution alive, and the revolutionary political system that ensures the reproduction of reformism. The charismatic leader envisions the system as limiting his revolutionary impulses and thus pushes for change, whereas the system considers the leader as fomenting chaos and rendering any bureaucratic truth provisional. For years, this creative duality was one of the geniuses of the Cuban Revolution.

In time, however, virtuous complementarity tends to become mutual blockage. For the charismatic leader, the system initially imposes external limits but in time becomes second nature. It is then difficult to distinguish between the limitations created by the system and those of the leader himself. The system, in turn, anticipates that the success of reformism will eventually undermine the leader's charisma and thus limits itself in order to prevent such an outcome. Complementarity thus becomes a game of mutual self-limitation. The risk is that, instead of complementary development, parallel stagnation may occur.

The relation between charisma and system tends to be unstable over time and particularly so in moments of transition.<sup>1</sup> In itself, charisma does not allow for transition. No charismatic leader has a charismatic successor. The transition can occur only to the extent that the system replaces charisma. For this to happen, however, the system must be reformist enough to deal with sources of chaos very different from those emerging from the leader. The situation becomes problematic when the strength of the charismatic leader objectively blocks the reformist potential of the system.

The logic of the problem may be summed up as follows: the socialist future of Cuba depends on the reformist capacity of the revolutionary system, but this capacity cannot develop in a system that has always depended on the charismatic leader for its strength. This accounts for Fidel's speech at the University of Havana on November 17, 2005.<sup>2</sup>

The two sides of the problem—the imbalance between resistance and an alternative and between charisma and the system—are closely related. The

predominance of resistance over an alternative is at once the product and the producer of the predominance of charisma over the system.

### WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

My analysis so far shows that Cuba is a problem for a left that, without abandoning the framework of postcapitalism and socialism, has evolved considerably during the past 50 years. The main lines of this evolution indicate some of the ways in which the Cuban people will be able to reach a solution to their problems, however difficult it may be. In other words, the Cuban Revolution, which in its early years contributed so much to the renovation of the left, can now take advantage of the renovation of the left that has occurred since that time, and in this process it will again assume an active role in the renovation of the left. Solving the problem, therefore, means performing the following dialectical movement: renovating Cuba by renovating the left; renovating the left by renovating Cuba.

The major steps in the renovation of the socialist left during the past 50 years include the following:

1. The gap between left theory and left praxis has been steadily widening, with specific consequences for Marxism. Whereas left critical theory (of which Marxism is the privileged heir) from the middle of the nineteenth century on was based on the realities of five capitalist countries of the global North (Germany, England, Italy, France, and the United States), the most creative social transformations carried out by the left occurred in the global South, having as their protagonists social classes or groups that for the most part were invisible to critical theory and even to Marxism—colonized and indigenous peoples, peasants, women, Afro-descendants, and others.<sup>3</sup> The gap between theory and praxis that thus emerged dominates our present theoretical and political condition: a half-blind theory running parallel to a half-invisible praxis.<sup>4</sup> Now, a half-blind theory is incapable of leading, and a half-invisible praxis is incapable of ascribing value to itself.

As it gradually lost its vanguard role, since much of what was happening totally escaped it,<sup>5</sup> revolutionary theory in the Northcentric left tradition gradually developed into a rearguard theory. I speak of rearguard theory in two senses. On the one hand, it is a theory that guides not according to principles or general laws supposedly grounding historical totality but rather on the basis of a constant open and critical analysis of the practices of social change. Thus, rearguard theory lets itself be surprised by changing and progressive practices, goes along with them, studies them, strives to learn from them, and uses them to deepen and expand progressive social struggles. On the other hand, rearguard theory takes into account in such changing practices both the most advanced, collective processes and actors and the least advanced and timid ones, those about to give up. As Sub-Comandante Marcos would say, it is a theory that accompanies those going more slowly. It is a theory conceiving of forwardness and backwardness (going ahead or lagging behind) as part of a new kind of dialectical process that does not presuppose the idea of totality but is treated as consisting of different, competing and ever unfinished totalization processes. Learning from Gramsci's lesson, this is the

way to create a socialist counterhegemony or, as in the Cuban case, to maintain and strengthen a socialist hegemony.

For example, the indigenous peoples of Latin America, largely invisible to or forgotten by modern critical theory (or at best visible as peasants), have been among the great protagonists of progressive struggles on the continent in recent decades. From the perspective of conventional vanguard theory, all this social and political innovation would be viewed as of marginal interest if not utterly irrelevant. As a result, the theory would fail to learn from the struggles of the indigenous peoples, with their notions of economy and welfare (the *suma kawsay* of the Quechuas or the *suma qamaña* of the Aymaras, "good living"), notions recently recognized in the constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia, along with conceptions of multiple forms of government and democracy—representative, participatory, and communitarian. The failure to learn from new transformative agencies ends up making the theory irrelevant.

2. The end of vanguard theory marks the end of any political organization based on it. Today, the parties shaped after the idea of vanguard theory are neither vanguard nor rearguard parties (rearguard as defined above). They are actually bureaucratic parties that, while in the opposition, exert a great deal of resistance but offer no alternative and, once in power, strongly resist any alternative. To replace the vanguard party, one or more rearguard parties must be created to accommodate the ferment of social activism generated when the results of democratic popular participation are evident even to those not yet participating.

3. Another great innovation of the past 50 years has been the appropriation by the left and the popular movement of hegemonic (liberal, capitalist) conceptions of democracy and their conversion into counterhegemonic, participatory, deliberative, communitarian, and radical conceptions. This innovation may be summed up by stating that the left has finally decided to take democracy seriously (something that, as Marx noted, the bourgeoisie never did). Taking democracy seriously means not only pushing it well beyond liberal boundaries but also creating a new concept of democracy: democracy as the whole process of turning unequal power relations into shared relations of authority. Even when it does not resort to fraud or depend on the decisive role of money in electoral campaigns or the manipulation of public opinion by controlling the media, liberal democracy is low-intensity democracy, since it is limited to creating an island of democratic exchange in an archipelago of (economic, social, racial, sexual, or religious) despotisms that in effect control the lives of citizens and communities. Democracy must exist beyond the political system—in the economic system, in family, racial, sexual, regional, and religious relations, and in neighborhood and communitarian relations. Socialism is democracy without end.

4. Equality has many dimensions and can only be fully realized if the acknowledgment of differences is pursued as well—that is, if unequal differences (which give rise to social hierarchies) are turned into equal differences (which celebrate social diversity as a way to eliminate hierarchies). In capitalist societies, there are many unequal relations of power (oppression, domination, exploitation, racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia). Democratization implies changing the unequal relations of power into shared

relations of authority. Since unequal relations of power always operate in networks (and are cumulative), a citizen, class, or group is seldom the victim of one of them alone. Thus, the struggle against them must likewise take place in networks—on the basis of broad alliances in which it is impossible to identify a privileged, homogeneous historical subject defined a priori in terms of social class. Political and organizational pluralism therefore becomes an imperative within the constitutional limits democratically adopted by the sovereign people. In Cuban society, unequal relations of power are different from those existing in capitalist societies, but they do exist (even if weaker), are equally multiple, and likewise operate in networks. The struggle against them must also take into account social, political, and organizational pluralism.

5. As pillars for the construction of a viable and sustainable socialism, the new conceptions of democracy and social, cultural, and political diversity call for a radical rethinking of both the monolithic centrality of the state and the supposedly homogeneous civil society.<sup>6</sup>

Possible starting points for a discussion aimed at contributing to a viable socialist future in Cuba are the following:

1. Cuba is perhaps the only country in the world where external conditions are not an alibi for leaders' incompetence or corruption but a cruel and decisive fact. This by no means implies that there is no room for manoeuvre, which may actually increase in view of the crisis of neoliberalism and the geostrategic changes that can be predicted in the short run. Such capital must not be squandered by refusing to consider alternatives, even if on behalf of heroic resistance. Henceforth, allowing resistance to predominate over an alternative is out of the question.

2. The Cuban regime has pushed to its limit the possible tension between ideological legitimation and the material conditions of life. Henceforth, the relevant changes must be changes in the material conditions of life of the majority of the population. Effective democracy, if it is to continue, will ratify ideology only to the extent that it has material meaning. Otherwise, ratification, as opposed to consent, cannot but imply resignation.

3. The long-term temporality of civilizational change must for a while be subordinated to the immediate temporality of urgent solutions.

4. A given society is capitalist not because all its economic and social relations are capitalist but because the latter determine how all the other economic and social relations in society operate. Similarly, a socialist society is socialist not because all its social and economic relations are socialist but because the latter determine how all the other relations in society operate. The situation in Cuba today is *sui generis*: on the one hand, a formally monolithic form of socialism that does not encourage the emergence of new kinds of noncapitalist relations or creatively determine the capitalist relations with which it (un)comfortably lives (even, as Fidel has recognized, to the point of corruption); on the other, a form of capitalism that, because it is wild and clandestine or semiclandestine, can barely be controlled. In this situation, there is no encouragement for the development of the cooperative and communitarian economic and social relations that are so promising. In this regard, the Cuban people should read and discuss the economic systems recognized in the constitution of Venezuela and in the recently approved

constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia—not in order to copy solutions but rather to ponder the paths of creativity of the Latin American left in recent decades. The importance of this learning process is implicit in Fidel's forceful acknowledgment of past mistakes in the speech at the University of Havana already mentioned: "A conclusion I have reached after many years: amongst the many mistakes we have made, the major one was to believe that anyone would know what socialism is or how to build socialism."

5. From the citizens' point of view, the difference between an inefficient socialism and an unfair capitalism may be smaller than it seems. A relation of domination (grounded in unequal political power) may have, in people's daily lives, consequences oddly similar to those of a relation of exploitation (grounded in the extraction of surplus value).

There is a vast and exciting field of social and political experimentation on the basis of which Cuba may once again contribute to the renovation of the world left. Among these experiments are the following:

1. *Democratizing democracy.* In contrast to liberal theoreticians, who maintain that democracy is the condition for everything else, I have argued that the genuine practice of democracy has its own conditions. I would venture to say that Cuba may well be the exception to my rule: in Cuba, radical, counterhegemonic, nonliberal democracy is the condition for everything else. Why? The crisis of liberal democracy is today more evident than ever. It is more and more obvious that liberal democracy does not guarantee the conditions for its own survival vis-à-vis "social fascism." By "social fascism" I mean the way in which extreme economic inequalities are translated into political inequalities not by the direct action of the political system of the capitalist state but with its complicity. For example, once water is privatized, the business that owns it gains veto power over people's lives (if they don't pay the bill, they will not get water). This amounts to more than economic or market power. Although the crisis is evident, it does not find it easy to envision the emergence of new concepts of politics and democracy. The difficulty is twofold: on the one hand, the predominance of capitalist relations whose reproduction imposes today the existence of low-intensity democracy alongside social fascism; on the other, the hegemony of liberal democracy in the social imaginary, often by invoking alleged traditions or historical memories legitimating liberal democracy. In Cuba, neither of these difficulties exists. Neither do capitalist relations prevail nor is there a minimally credible liberal tradition. Hence, the possibility is there for radical democracy to be assumed as a starting point without having to bear everything that the dominant experience of democracy for the past 50 years indicates has been surpassed.

2. *Converting the vanguard party into a rearguard party.* This will be a party that directs less and facilitates more; that promotes the discussion of important questions so that in their everyday social practices citizens and communities will become better empowered to distinguish strong from weak solutions; and that readily accepts the existence of other forms of organizing sectoral interests with which it aims to have relations of hegemony rather than control. This is the most complex transformation of them all, and it can only be brought about in the context of the experiments described below.

3. *Transformative constitutionalism.* Transitions including important changes in power relations are usually related to constitutional processes. During the

past 20 years, several countries in Africa and Latin America have experienced constitutional processes. This recent history allows us to distinguish two kinds of constitutionalism: modern constitutionalism strictly speaking and transformative constitutionalism. Modern constitutionalism, which has prevailed uncontested until very recently, was constructed from the top down by political elites with a view to creating institutionally monolithic states and supposedly homogeneous civil societies. This has always involved superposing a single class, culture, race, ethnicity, or region to the detriment of others. On the contrary, transformative constitutionalism is catalyzed by the initiative of the popular classes as a form of class struggle—the struggle of the excluded and their allies—whose aim is to create new criteria for social inclusion and putting an end to class, racial, ethnic, cultural, and other forms of oppression.

Such social and political democratization implies the reinvention or refounding of the modern state. Such reinvention or refounding cannot but be experimental. In other words, the new transformative constitution would ideally have a limited period of validity, say, five years, at the end of which the constituent process would be reopened in order for mistakes to be corrected and new knowledge introduced. Limiting the period of validity of the new constitution would have the political advantage—precious in times of transition—of not creating definitive winners and losers. Cuba now has the ideal conditions for this constitutional experimentation.

4. *The experimental state.* Even if in different ways, both the terminal crisis currently affecting neoliberalism and the recent experience of the more progressive countries of Latin America suggest that a new state centrality is under way. This new centrality is more open to social, economic and political diversity. On the social level, it acknowledges interculturality, pluriethnicity, and even plurinationality, as is the case in Ecuador and Bolivia. On the economic level, it acknowledges different kinds of ownership: state, communitarian, cooperative, and individual. On the political level, it acknowledges different kinds of democracy: representative or liberal, participatory, deliberative, referendary, communitarian. A centrality based on social homogeneity gives way to a centrality based on social heterogeneity, a centrality presided over by the principle of complexity. The new centrality works in different ways in fields in which the efficiency of solutions has been demonstrated (in Cuba, in education and health, for instance, regardless of the present degradation and inequity of the system) or in fields in which their inefficiency has been demonstrated (in Cuba, increasing inequalities, for example, or transportation and agriculture) and in the various new fields that emerge in transition processes (in Cuba, for example, the creation of a new political institutionality and reconstruction of socialist hegemony based on high-intensity democracy, capable of fostering the reduction of social inequality and the expansion of social, cultural, and political diversity). Regarding the last two (fields of proven inefficiency and new fields), there are no infallible recipes or definitive solutions. Concerning these fields, the principle of complex centrality recommends democratically controlled experimentation. Experimentation must run through the whole society, and thus the state must become an experimental state as well. In a period of significant change in the role of the state in social regulation, inevitably the institutional materiality of



the state, however rigid, will suffer great challenges. Moreover, this institutional materiality is inscribed in a national state space-time undergoing the crisscrossed impact of local and global space-times.

Since transition periods are characterized by the coexistence of solutions of the old and of the new paradigm, equally contradictory in themselves, experimentation must become, to my mind, a principle of the formation of institutions. Because it is imprudent to make institutional options irreversible in this phase, the state must experiment by allowing different institutional solutions to coexist in competition for some time as pilot studies under the constant monitoring of citizen collectives with a view to assessing performances comparatively. The provision of public goods, particularly in the social arena, may thus take various forms; a choice among them must take place only after the alternatives are scrutinized by the citizens with regard to their democratic efficacy and quality.

This new form of a possible democratic state must be rooted in two principles of political experimentation. First, the state is genuinely experimental only to the extent that the different institutional solutions are given equal opportunities to develop according to their own logic. This is the only way to convert the democratic struggle into a struggle for democratic alternatives, the only way to fight democratically against democratic dogmatism. This institutional experimentation cannot but cause some instability and incoherence in state action, and the state fragmentation eventually resulting from it may inadvertently generate new exclusions.

Under these circumstances, the experimental state must not only grant equality of opportunities to different projects of democratic institutionality but also (this being the second principle of political experimentation) establish the patterns of inclusion that will facilitate the active citizenship necessary to monitor and evaluate the performance of alternative projects. Inclusion is indispensable for turning institutional instability into a field of democratic deliberation.

5. *Another production is possible.* Production is one of the most important domains of social experimentation, and here Cuba can assume strategic leadership in search of alternative solutions. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the task of thinking about and fighting for economic and social alternatives is particularly urgent for two interrelated reasons. First, we live in a time when the idea that there are no alternatives to capitalism has reached a level of acceptance probably without precedent in the history of world capitalism. Secondly, the systemic alternative to capitalism represented by the centralized socialist economies has revealed itself as nonviable. The political authoritarianism and economic weakness of centralized economic systems were dramatically exposed by the collapse of these systems in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Paradoxically, in the past 30 years, capitalism has revealed as never before its self-destructive drive, from the absurd increase in the concentration of wealth and social exclusion to the environmental crisis, from the financial to the energy crisis, from the endless war for the control of access to resources to the food crisis. By the same token, the collapse of the systems of state socialism has opened up the political space for the emergence of multiple forms of popular economy—from solidary economy to popular cooperatives, from

recovered enterprises to agrarian-reform settlements, and from fair trade to forms of regional integration according to principles of reciprocity and solidarity (such as the Bolivarian Alternative). Popular economic organizations are extremely diverse. While some imply radical (although local) ruptures with capitalism, others find ways of coexisting with it. The general fragility of all these alternatives resides in the fact that they occur in capitalist societies in which capitalist relations of production and reproduction determine the general logic of social, economic, and political development. The privileged situation of Cuba in the domain of economic experimentation lies in its being able to determine, on the basis of noncapitalist principles, logics, and objectives, the rules under which capitalist economic organizations may function.

In order to bring to fulfillment all the ferment of progressive transformation contained in its current political moment, Cuba will need the solidarity of every left individual, organization, and movement (as defined here) in the world and particularly in Latin America. This is the hour for the left worldwide to give back what it owes Cuba for being what it is.

## NOTES

1. Aurelio Alonso (2007) distinguishes two ongoing transition processes: one concerning the dynamics of change within "a major transition having begun almost half a century ago," the other concerning the weight of subjectivity—the question of the mark Fidel may leave on the imaginary of future generations of Cubans.

2. In Fidel's memorable words: "This country can destroy itself; this Revolution can destroy itself. Others cannot destroy it. We, ourselves, can, and it would be our fault." Commenting on Fidel's speech, Aurelio Alonso (2006) wonders: "Why would Fidel's primary concern be focused on the reversibility of our own process?" His answer is crystal-clear: "Fidel knows that the Revolution cannot be destroyed from outside but that it can destroy itself, and he points to corruption as the evil that can bring about destruction. I agree with Fidel, but he did not go far enough. I wonder, indeed, if the collapse of the Soviet system was, in essence, a consequence of corruption, even granting that corruption was part of the framework of deviations. I believe that bureaucracy and lack of democracy, together with corruption, can reverse socialism. I do not mean electoral systems, pluriparty confrontations, campaign struggles, power alternation. I mean democracy, the democracy we have not been able to create on earth, even though we all believe we know what it is."

3. Herein lies the original creativity and theoretical contribution of the Cuban Revolution. The drastic external conditions imposed on the revolution ended up robbing it of some of that creativity. For this reason, Cuba was forced to adopt a conception of Marxism that, not being that of the global North, was closer to the reality of the Soviet bloc, itself distinct from Cuban reality. At the international conference "The Work of Karl Marx and the Challenges of the Twenty-first Century," which took place in Havana on May 3, 2006, Ricardo Alarcón de Quesada (2006: 20) stated: "The conversion of the Soviet experience into a paradigm for those who in other places fought their own anticapitalist battles, and the imperative obligation of defending it from its inflamed and powerful enemies, led to the subordination of a great part of the revolutionary movement to the policies and interests of the USSR." In this context, Cuba's autonomy in deciding to help Angola in its struggle for independence is remarkable and ever a source of pride for the Cuban people. The internationalist motivation overcame the geopolitical interests of the Soviet Union.

4. In the case of Marxism, there was much creativity in adapting the theory to non-European realities left unanalyzed by Marx. Regarding Latin America, suffice it to invoke Mariátegui. Nevertheless, for a very long time political orthodoxies prevented such creativity from turning into political action. Indeed, the most creative authors were persecuted (a good example is Mariátegui himself, who was charged with populism and romanticism—a very serious charge

in the 1930s). Nowadays, the situation is completely different, as witness the fact that another great innovator of Marxist thought, Álvaro García Linera, is the vice president of Bolivia.

5. In other words, the primacy of intelligence and political audacity over discipline, which was the hallmark of the vanguard, ends up turned into its opposite: the primacy of discipline over intelligence and audacity as a way of concealing or controlling the originality of the processes of social change foreseen by the theory.

6. For a very lucid overview of civil society in Cuba, see Alonso (2008).

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