

JOSE MARTI

AND

CUBAN LIBERATION

By CARLOS RAFAEL RODRIGUES

With an Introduction by

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INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK

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INTRODUCTION

By JESUS COLON

José Martí, inspirer and organizer of the Cuban Revolution of 1895 against Spain, was born in Havana on January 28, 1853. In this centenary year, his name is honored by people throughout the world as a great patriot and liberator, a man for our time.

Martí was a man of many talents: a jurist, a poet, a master of Spanish prose, a teacher in many universities in Latin America of language, literature, and philosophy. He was one of the greatest orators of all time in the Spanish language, a constant inspiration for children and youth. As a journalist, as a critic of literature and art, as a poet, as a great revolutionary leader, he left his imprint on Cuban and Latin American history and culture.

His father, a native of Valencia, Spain, was a first sergeant in the Spanish Royal Artillery Corps, and his mother came from the Canary Islands. His parents were "honest folk, but with little schooling and few intellectual interests," as an intimate friend described them. Martí was a brilliant student and one of his elementary school teachers paid for his secondary education at the Havana Institute, where he enrolled in 1866, winning several scholastic prizes.

The young Martí entered the struggle for Cuban independence as a journalist. His articles, together with an incident caused by some soldiers, led to his arrest in 1869 on "suspicion of treason." When only 16 years old, he was condemned to six years in prison and started serving his sentence in April 1870, being deported to Spain on January 15, 1871, for the remainder of his term.

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES

No sooner did he arrive in Madrid when he published his pamphlet *El Presidio Politico en Cuba* (*Political Prisons in Cuba*), in which he revealed the horrors of the prison system and the crimes committed in Cuba by the representatives of the Spanish government. While keeping in touch with developments in his native country, Martí took advantage of his exile to attend the universities of Saragossa and Madrid, earning degrees in law, philosophy, and literature from Madrid University in 1874. During the previous year, when the first Spanish Republic was established by military coup, Martí published his pamphlet *La República Española ante la Revolución Cubana*, in which he indicted the Spanish Republicans who reneged on their promises of independence for Cuba.

His exile over, Martí visited some European cities, and then came to Mexico in February 1875. Here he worked for the *Revista Universal* and wrote his allegorical play, *Amor con Amor se Paga* (*Love Repays Love*). After a short visit to Havana, we find him teaching French, English, Italian, and German literature and philosophy at the Central Normal School in Guatemala, until 1878 when he resigned as a gesture of solidarity with his countryman who was unjustly dismissed as director. Availing himself of the amnesty declared by the Spanish government, he then returned to Cuba with his wife, Carmen Zayas Bazán. There she gave birth to Martí's only son.

Martí was again deported to Spain on September 25, 1879, because of his constant activities on behalf of Cuban independence. During this second sojourn in Spain, Martí came to recognize that there were two Spains, the feudal-autocratic and the liberal. The former was in power, while confusion and ineptitude prevailed among the liberals, leading Martí to the conclusion that only open revolution could secure Cuba's independence.

With this thought uppermost, Martí came to New York on January 3, 1880, and three weeks later he was already delivering his first speech to the Cubans in New York, at Steck Hall, on the tasks of the revolution. Martí lived in the United States until 1892, carrying on together with his compatriots his life work for Cuban independence. During this period he wrote for the *New York Sun* and *The Hour*, and was also correspondent

for the most important papers in Latin America. For a while he acted as consul for some of the Latin American nations, and was the representative in the United States of several Latin American academies of science and cultural societies. At the same time, he continued his prolific literary work, publishing two volumes of poetry and a novel, translating novels and a book on logic, and also issuing four numbers of his children's magazine, *La Edad de Oro* (*The Golden Age*). His lectures to Spanish-speaking audiences in New York, Tampa and Key West, some of which have come down to us intact, reveal the greatness of Martí as a political orator and thinker.

It was during these years in the United States that Martí witnessed the rise of imperialism, and came to understand its danger for all of Latin America. This is shown especially in his magnificent study of the 1891 Monetary Conference of the American Republics, called in Washington, D.C., by the United States government to outline the first principles of its imperialist policy toward Latin America and the world. Martí saw it, sharply and clearly, years before this policy was fully revealed as economic slavery for the Latin American peoples. His articles on the origin and purpose of the Conference helped to alert the Latin American nations and to hamper the full realization of American imperialist aims in that period.

While in this country, Martí also witnessed the great upsurge of the labor movement, beginning with the Knights of Labor in the 1880's, and his writings reflect his keen interest in these developments and his deep sympathy for the workers. Although not a Socialist, he appreciated the contributions of Karl Marx, as indicated, among other things, by his dispatch to *La Nación* of Buenos Aires, reporting the memorial meeting at Cooper Union in New York on the death of the founder of scientific socialism in 1883. Martí wrote of him as the "titanic interpreter of the anger of the European worker" and "triumphant penetrator of the whys and whereofs of human misery and the destinies of men, a man ridden with the anguish to do good."

On January 22, 1890, Martí took his first organizational step for Cuban independence when he founded *La Liga* (*The League*) among Cuban exiles in New York, followed by the

setting up of branches in Tampa, Florida. This was soon followed by the organization of the Cuban Revolutionary Party in New York. Martí drew up the draft of its constitution and its program, which the Cuban and Puerto Rican clubs in New York approved on January 5, 1892. The first point in the program declares: "The Cuban Revolutionary Party has been formed in order to achieve through the united efforts of men of good will, complete independence for the island of Cuba and to aid and further the cause of Puerto Rican independence." The newspaper *Patria* was founded by Martí in New York as the official organ of the party.

Through this party and its organ, himself traveling to the United States cities where there were sizable communities of Cubans and Puerto Ricans as well as to the Caribbean countries, by his speeches and writings, Martí managed to achieve agreement among leaders of various opinions that the primary task was to end Spanish rule and to achieve independence for the Cuban nation.

Among the most significant documents written by Martí is the address of the Revolutionary Party to Cuba, penned on March 25, 1895, calling the Cuban people to arms. It is better known as the Manifesto of Montecristi, after the town in Santo Domingo where it was signed by Martí, as the representative of the Cuban Revolutionary Party, and by Máximo Gómez, as the Commander-in-chief of the Army of Liberation, as both men prepared to leave for the Cuban battlefield.

At midnight on April 11, 1895, Martí and General Gómez landed at Playitas in Cuba. At Dos Rios, on May 18, 1895, in the first skirmish in which he took part, Martí was killed. He laid down his life for the independence of his country from Spain, an aim soon fulfilled, and for freedom from American imperialist intervention, a struggle which still goes on.

The masses of the people will not forget Martí's struggles and teachings, despite the attempt to obscure Cuba's greatest figure with grandiloquent phrases uttered in formal recognition of the Martí centenary. In sharp contrast to this empty homage, the people of Cuba and many other countries arranged lectures, cultural festivals, and congresses where the living word of Martí

and its meaning for us today were presented in all their vital significance. In Havana a great Martí Congress for the Rights of Youth met on January 25-26, 1953, dedicated to the re-establishment of constitutional rights abrogated by the Batista coup of March 10, 1952. A few days later, on January 28, the streets of Havana resounded with one of the greatest parades in the history of that city, organized by the Federation of University Students, in memory of Martí and against the *de facto* government. Popular tributes to Martí, expressing his meaning for today, also took place in all the capitals of Latin America.

Martí's centenary was also marked in many other parts of the world. His significance was brought home to the forward-looking people of the world when the Bureau of the World Council of Peace honored Martí, together with other great figures such as Tchou Yuán, Copernicus, Rabelais, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose anniversaries fall in 1953.

While Martí was practically ignored in the official Anglo-Saxon world as a whole (his name does not even appear in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*!), great meetings of tribute to him took place in many cities in the Socialist world. The highlight of these tributes was the cultural homage to Martí in Moscow, on January 28, 1953, in the Central House of Art Workers, with Ilya Ehrenburg presiding, and with many outstanding figures of Soviet science and art attending.

As we conclude these notes, Batista has established a new regime of terror in Martí's country, reminiscent of the bloody Machado dictatorship, and the days of the Spanish *grillete*, the moist, dark low dungeons in *La Cabaña* fortress, with the sharks waiting in the sea as the victim is pushed through the round trap door on the floor. Many leaders of the trade unions, political opposition, youth and others critical of the regime are being hunted or have already been arrested. Popular newspapers have been suppressed, and all critics of Batista are threatened with persecution. The example and teachings of Martí assume even greater significance for our day in the light of these new events—for the Cuban people in their fight for national salvation from imperialism and home-grown military fascism, and for the people of the United States in their fight against the very source of world reaction.

MARTI AND CUBAN LIBERATION

By CARLOS RAFAEL RODRIGUES

THE CUBAN people celebrate the hundredth anniversary of José Martí's birth with a sense of his living reality and timeliness. How near to us the brilliant revolutionary of 1895 is! He seems to move among us still, offering his clear advice, sharply upbraiding our present enemies, and warmly encouraging our friends.

Few heroes can point to a similar fate. Usually the guide of an era exhausts his influence in his own day. As a rule, neither his program nor the solutions he sought can be handed on to the future. Very quickly he seems to be separated from his successors by an unbridgeable gap. José Martí, on the contrary, grows as time passes. A half century after his tragic death his influence is still with us. He was the guide of his time; he is also the forerunner of our own.

There are undeniably factors of historical accident in this survival. For if Martí, General Maceo, and the men of 1895 had succeeded in winning full independence for our island, he would today be more remote from us and we would look upon him simply as an example of past greatness. But the thwarting of our complete independence, the oppressive presence of United States imperialism which has replaced the former Spanish domination, has fused the tasks of successive generations of republicans with those outlined by the liberators. Hence we get this very real feeling that José Martí is alive and related to the Cuban heroes of our own day. But that is not all. Martí the Apostle continues to live despite the fact that his country remains in colonial bondage—only with a new label on it. The significant thing in his historic leadership is that he warned, with profound and clear-eyed vision, that the struggle which

he and his comrades began was only a phase; and, once that phase was over, a new and much more difficult period would begin. It was indispensable to tear Cuba away from Spain. But to take steps to prevent the United States from substituting its domination, to set up a republic different from those to which the liberating revolutions in South America of the early nineteenth century had given rise—that constituted the further stage in this process, without which the aim of our Cuban fighters for freedom would remain abortive. It is this far-sighted vision which makes Martí a splendid forerunner, preserving him from historical oblivion and projecting his figure across our own day in a bright light of continuity.

Here let us state quite bluntly that it is not a question of attributing to Martí ideological views that are remote from him and which would detract from his true significance. It is tempting to analyze the great man and discover in him supposedly socialist sentiments, or to imagine what his position would be if he were faced with the problems confronting us today. But that is an artificial game. For, as we shall have occasion to see quite clearly, no one was more a product of his age, more expressive of his class, more attached to the ways of his time than José Martí. His greatness as a leader arises from this faithfulness to his day and age. It defines, moreover, his limitations, which it would be wrong to conceal.

Quite recently, in celebrating the memory of General Maceo, we outlined the unique conditions under which José Martí, General Antonio Maceo, and General Máximo Gómez became the three leading figures of 1895. In past centuries the task of achieving national independence was historically the work of the bourgeoisie itself. Stalin made this point clear in his masterful revolutionary analysis of the national question. Cuba was no exception and, at first, followed the rule. But our island undertook its decisive struggle for freedom too late; the Cuban bourgeoisie by itself could not complete the cycle of liberation as it was achieved by the United States and the other Latin American nations. During the Ten Years' struggle (1868-78) the revolutionary upsurge of the Cuban bourgeoisie spent itself. The latter then behaved as did similar groups in other countries

where there was a retreat from the fight for independence; it took fright at the rising strength of the people. It was terrified by the economic sacrifices the war of liberation would entail. Hence it preferred to take the line of least resistance, the road of reforms and negotiations with the ruling government: first Madrid, then Washington.

The Cuban bourgeoisie at the end of the nineteenth century thus surrendered its revolutionary leadership and proved incapable of equaling its predecessors of the generation of 1868. So Cuba found herself in a specific and almost exceptional situation. At that time we did not have a working class sufficiently numerous and politically coherent enough to take up the task of liberation which the others had forsaken. It must not be forgotten that the Cuban bourgeoisie arose by exploiting not free labor but slave labor. As a result the Cuban working class was too young. Moreover, it was led by Spanish reformists and anarchists, many of whom thought they could brush aside the national question and maintained that the working class should not bother about a problem so alien to its own interests. Only the workers' deeply-rooted national sentiments and the ideological clarity of men like those who organized the 1892 Congress or exiles such as Carlos Baliño furnished the proper guidance and succeeded in overcoming these mistaken notions, so that the inexperienced working class was able to become the strongest bulwark of the independence movement.

But our working class could not yet be the national leader of the movement. Revolutionary leadership devolved on the middle class. The merit of Martí and Maceo lies in the fact that they overcame the waverings and hesitations of the social class to which they belonged and assumed leadership of the revolutionary movement with a resoluteness, insight and skill which very few middle class leaders in any country or period have shown.

Hence, as Blas Roca has pointed out, José Martí has to be judged according to "the special conditions under which he assumed revolutionary leadership—as regards the setting, the circumstances, and the aim of his struggles and actions."

When we evaluate him in that way, we realize that Martí encountered problems that were unknown to George Washing-

ton and Simon Bolívar. These two architects of North and South American independence led typically bourgeois revolutions with certain feudal vestiges. They established the rule of the native landowners and the newly formed class of manufacturers. The "social" question—the inevitable conflict between bourgeoisie and working class—had not yet arisen. José Martí guided the revolution in a later and different period. Working class parties had already come into being; the revolutionary ideology of the working class was making headway. This inner contradiction is discernible as a component part of the future Cuban Republic, which did not emerge like Venezuela or Colombia in the days of Bolívar. To understand better the importance of this historical factor in the movement Martí led, it is well to recall that only twenty-two years after his death there occurred the Russian Socialist Revolution of 1917. Thenceforth the liberation of colonial and semi-colonial countries increasingly lost its character of bourgeois struggle—which it had had during the previous stage—and became linked with the world liberation struggles of the working class.

Martí had to deal with another special Cuban problem: the Negro question. The "fear of the Negro," as Martí himself openly termed it, served as a brake on the bourgeois leaders throughout the nineteenth century, inclining them to annexationist and reformist solutions. It still persisted (indeed, it is still with us in our own day!) when the impact of 1895 was felt, and its correct handling tested the mettle of the new revolutionary leaders. Together with the newly emerging labor question and the bourgeois eagerness to travel the "evolutionary" road so as not to disrupt the economy from which the capitalists themselves were profiting, "fear of the Negro" contributed to the development by the bourgeoisie of the reactionary movement for autonomy.

Such were the conditions in which Martí forged his revolutionary leadership; such the setting and historical circumstances of his struggles and activity. Without them it would be impossible to evaluate him properly. Taking them into account, we look upon Martí as the sure-eyed guide of the Cuban middle class responsible for leading the struggle for emancipation from Spain.

The Radical Revolutionary

THE FIRST thing that stands out in him was his irrevocable, undeviating decision to win total independence for Cuba. Not for a single instant did José Martí yield to the temptation to accept a compromise solution or halfway measures. Neither annexation nor autonomy—only complete freedom: that was his ideal. He realized that the annexationist solution had strong class roots and assailed the “poisoned source”—that is, the desire to preserve slavery—which was one of its basic motives. He knew that some elements of the Cuban wealthy class would look favorably on this anti-national trend (“Tomorrow,” he warned with foresight, “it will disturb our Republic”) and asserted: “The habit of slavery inspires neither respect nor courage in those men so rooted in it that they have lost all self-confidence.” He added: “No Cuban will lower himself to the point where he is looked upon as a moral leper.” As for himself, that would be “like dying.” Every underhanded effort by a Cuban group to imitate political institutions in the United States aroused his misgivings and elicited an exasperated reply. Any United States allusion to Cuba tinged with insult or contempt kindled his anger and provoked retorts like his robust and eloquent answer to the Philadelphia magazine, *The Manufacturer*.*

Martí knew, however, that annexation and, in general, all pro-United States tendencies were less of a danger at that time than the autonomy movement. That is why he concentrated his main ideological attacks on the latter. He began by denying the point—which even Sanguily mistakenly accepted on occasion—that propaganda for autonomy would assist in revolutionary education. He declared: “Autonomy did not arise in Cuba as the child of the revolution but against it.” He characterized the autonomy party as “the damming up of the revolution.” Thus he did away with any tendencies to make concessions to the reformist camp. Like a good revolutionary, he could distinguish between the tactical use of a reform to advance the cause as a whole and the subordination of the latter to a conception that would make reform the be-all and end-all. He never tired of exposing the class

* This magazine waged a campaign for U.S. annexation of Cuba in 1889.—Ed.

content of autonomism and branded those who advocated that course “a brood of surfeited natives”—that is, representatives of the Cuban wealthy class which had now become a reactionary force. Thus Martí, so little given to hate, so ready to forgive and love even his enemies, has bequeathed a permanently valid lesson in righteous political hatred, a lesson of justifiable contempt for those who behaved as shameful servants of the oppressors. Of those autonomist leaders who failed to “leave the sidelines of the struggle” and enter the ranks of the independence movement, he predicted that “some, if they do not seek refuge in time in those American countries where they can work and speak their native language, will be doomed to isolation or death; others perhaps will go to Madrid, where they will become ‘counts of freedom’, ornaments bedecking the head-dress of that delicate monarchy.”

That is a picture of the Martí whom we have defined as the radical revolutionary of his time. That is his position on the basic aims of the struggle of his day: independence or reform.

Popular Revolution

WHAT KIND of a liberating revolution did Martí lead? He led the kind of revolution which his own historical moment demanded of him and which his social class was capable of carrying through.

It could not be of the type that Bolívar led, which gave power to a combination of feudal landlords and conservative capitalists. Nor could it be of the type of modern revolutions in which the national liberation movement is based on the working class—as in the case of Mao Tse-tung and his capable Chinese fighters. Martí’s revolution was halfway between these two. It was a popular revolution but with the limitations of middle class leadership and a middle class program.

The popular content of the 1895 revolution is undeniable. Martí stressed this when he asserted: “The people—the suffering masses—are the real leaders of revolutions.” This movement of the “suffering masses” developed slowly until it replaced the upper class rebellion of twenty-seven years before. The *Chroni-*

cles of Miró Argenter contain direct proof of this. Maceo's faithful companion wrote that the liberating army was basically composed of peasants and Negroes. And as he watched that heroic, tattered band of Negro and white soldiers on the outskirts of Havana laying the foundations of a nation, he saw them open their ranks with silent hostility to let through the familiar procession of well-fed planters on their way to their plantations. The planters begged the leaders of the Independence struggle to allow them to grind "one more sugar crop" before shutting down their sugar mills. The contrast is a striking one.

The popular revolution of Martí and his party, based on and achieved by the democratic elements of the people, supported by the Cuban workers outside the country, went much further in its aims than the preceding bourgeois revolution of 1868.

Nevertheless, it has been asserted that Martí, caught in the contradictions inherent in the middle class, did not go as far as he should have gone; that he stopped short and simply indicated formal programmatic solutions, without going to the root of the problem. Thus one writer claims that Martí "weeps with the poor, but does not seek to put an end to poverty; he loves his Negro brother deeply, but does not attack the causes that keep him in a position of social inferiority; he wants a Republic, but does not want to abolish social classes." Demanding of Martí a program aimed at "putting an end to poverty," eliminating the causes of Negro oppression, and abolishing social classes—in other words, a clear-cut socialist program—the writer recalls that the Paris Commune had taken place more than two decades before 1895 and that Marxism, the general outlines of which Martí at least knew, was beginning to take root among thousands of workers.

Here, however, we are in the presence of an arbitrary transposition of problems and methods. What Martí accomplished at the end of the nineteenth century, more than twenty years before the first socialist country in the world was established, on an island without an industrial base and steeped in colonialism, bore a profoundly revolutionary stamp; and his program came to be that of the radical wing of the liberation movement. To demand Negro equality in the face of the still powerful former

slave-owners, to promise land to the peasants and exiles at the expense of the big absentee landlords, to assert the people's right to assume revolutionary leadership meant to accomplish fully the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. Only a working class party with a revolutionary proletarian ideology could lead the other revolution. Not until the Bolsheviks under the leadership of Lenin appeared on the stage of history did there develop the thesis of working class leadership in the bourgeois-democratic revolution and its transformation into a socialist revolution. Thus this great leader developed the basic ideas propounded by Marx and Engels in 1848, during the democratic struggles in France and Germany.

The Republic of Martí

THE REPUBLIC of Martí is democratic in its political aspects and bourgeois in its social content.

Martí was familiar with the feudal republics of Latin America, products of a social structure based on the rule of the big landlords; he sought a different outcome for Cuba. Moreover, his life in the United States brought him face to face with the way in which full-blown capitalism—just entering the stage of imperialism—was shockingly distorting what Jefferson had envisioned as a new society without drastic inequalities. Indeed, all of Martí's writings express his hatred of the "frightful plantations" in the South, where the plantation owners ruled over the people with a lash, and his horror at the spectacle of misery, depravity, corruption, and violent class conflict spawned by big capitalism. Almost every one of his *North American Sketches* expresses his dismay when he got to know the inner workings of "the monster."

That was why he hoped to turn Cuba into a republic "of social equilibrium." He wanted it to maintain "a balance in social questions." He felt that by organizing the country on democratic foundations and by preventing economic power from being concentrated in the hands of a few he could avoid poverty and perhaps also curb the violent labor disputes about which he

wrote. If you look closely at his political writings, you will find numerous references to the way in which he hoped our country would develop. Here it is quite clear that José Martí wanted Cuba to develop a social organization of diversified agriculture, based on a class of independent small farmers—in the Jeffersonian tradition. He warns frequently against artificial industrialization and even affirms: "We are not an industrial country nor will we be for some time to come. . . . We have more gold and silver in our fibrous plants, our rich vegetation, our dye and aromatic woods than in our mines." He understood the precarious nature of a national wealth based on sugar and, as if foreseeing future events, he warned: "Sugar cane is facing increasing competition—from corn, squash, and potatoes." He thought, first of all, of replacing the threatened crops with new and surer ones.

It would take us too far afield—in fact, it would require an overall study of José Martí—to determine whether the Republic Martí hoped for was possible, whether his program could have been realized as the high point of our independence. Here let us simply apply the hindsight of history to understand the development of processes which at that time were barely in embryo. Thus, we may point out that Martí counted on setting up in our West Indies region a kind of dyke against economic invasion by the United States; and he thought it possible to isolate Cuba from the heightened tempo of capitalist development which our powerful neighbor to the north had entered. But although the activity of Martí, Maceo, and the popular resistance movement they guided would have made our island pursue a different course, we would not have been able to escape the inevitable development of capitalism. Hence the social equilibrium Martí sought was unattainable.

But it is idle to conjecture about what might have been or might have happened. The important thing is to understand that Martí's ideas—summing up the best and most advanced in middle class thinking in his day—are radical in outline and design; they are as daring as they could be, considering the circumstances under which he operated, the class he embodied, and his responsibility as creator of a united front that strove to bring

together the exiled tobacco worker and his Cuban employer, the former slave and his dispossessed master. The fact of the matter is that more than once Martí did not express everything he felt and hoped, so as not to endanger the unity he had worked so hard to build. As he told Rafael Serra: "You will see what pours out of my soul when the crucial hour for these things arrives."

For in order thoroughly to understand the 1895 program, we must consider it in the light of the revolutionary weapon which Martí and Maceo were in the process of forging. The men of 1868 began their revolt against Spain with the ideas of their social class, making only such concessions as were necessary to the mass of slaves. Those of 1895 sought "as many elements of all kinds as could be recruited." They had to take into account conflicting interests, reconcile differences, postpone ideological controversies. Martí's great merit—the one which sets him apart as a revolutionary guide who went beyond his own day—was that he was able to build this unity without splitting off the extreme left wing. On the contrary, he considered it a very valuable element in the coalition. He was especially cordial to the left-wing socialists and to many of the working class leaders who were deep-dyed anarchists. Far from attempting to isolate them, Martí included them in his enterprise and persistently asked their help, which he deemed of inestimable value and importance. As his preparatory work went forward, the devoted and single-minded organizer of the revolution realized that the rich were turning their backs on the cause of liberation; it became virtually impossible to approach them for financial contributions. So Martí then turned to the humble masses and found in them a warmth of patriotism which the well-to-do had lost. From that moment on he entrusted the fate of the movement to the self-sacrificing working people of Tampa and Key West. And he asserted, in the tone of a man who clearly understood the nature of the revolutionary process, that the workers "are the best ones among us."

Martí and the Working Class

ON THE occasion of this hundredth anniversary of his birth, we must get at the heart of Martí's ideas about social questions. Antonio Martínez Bello undertook this task some years ago. But although his work included an impressive amount of material proving conclusively that Martí was sympathetic to the cause of the working class in the main struggles of his time, the analysis remained incomplete; and the author's conclusions—in which he presents a Martí inclined to socialism—seem to us exaggerated.

This much, however, is certain. When we study any of the numerous articles the great leader devoted to social problems, we see that Martí did not view the problem of labor with the eyes of one who pinned his faith in the bourgeoisie and therefore feared the rising class-consciousness of the working class in the future Republic he was creating. On the contrary, indulging occasionally in a spirit of romanticism that caused him even to idealize certain aspects of the workers' struggle, he expressed his unequivocal support of the growing protest of the working class in the United States. As for his own country, he declared that he was formulating a policy designed to satisfy what he considered the just aspirations of the workers and which the United States monopolists of that day were brutally denying.

"As always it is the humble, the barefooted, the helpless, the fishermen," he exclaimed, "who join forces man to man and stand up to injustice." He spoke of "uniting all the real forces of labor against those who strangle freedom with their corruption, their plunder, and their luxury." "Truth," he affirmed, "is better revealed to the poor and those who suffer"—a comment that coincides with the outlook of dialectical materialism. He called the workers "the vanguard of humanity" and considered them "the most sacred among us." Applying this opinion to Cuba, he declared: "The Cuban workers in the north, those heroes of misery, were, in the first war, a constant and effective support." And he described a meeting of exiled Cuban workers in the following terms: "This is the working people, the backbone of our coalition; the shoulder-belt embroidered by a woman's hand in which the sword of Cuba is kept sheathed; the arsenal

of redemption where men build and forgive and foresee and love."

When you glance through his *North American Sketches*, you realize how his first, highly idealized impressions of the United States gave way, in his lively mind, to a sober view of the social question, which was then erupting with violence in the Knights of Labor and other still young and confused labor organizations. Formerly he had been attracted, even dazzled, by the United States as a creative power, a land of opportunity, with outlets for every kind of individual initiative. He had looked upon it as a Promised Land, where social distinctions were beginning to be erased; where the young rail-splitter of today could become President, the blacksmith a steel magnate, the illiterate immigrant "a self made man." To one coming from the other America with its feudal roots, this strange land of promise seemed, at first glance, to exemplify his ideas of the development of the individual, in which the merits of each "single, separate person" counted more than the weight of social caste and artificial inequalities. Little by little, however, bitter reality cleared away the mist from his eager eyes. It was then that he discovered the ugly inner workings of the United States. The existence of gnawing poverty, which he himself experienced and from which he suffered, rubbed off the false sheen which had at first dazzled the newly arrived visitor. Strikes, mass demonstrations, workers' meetings—diligently and with warm sympathy he reported on these for his newspapers. In 1882, he summed up his new view of things in the U.S.A.:

"We are here in the midst of a struggle between capitalists and workers. To the former it is credit in the bank, creditors' demands, sellers' terms, balance sheets at the end of the year. To the worker it is the daily grind, immediate and pressing need, wives and children eating in the afternoon what the poor worker earned for them in the morning. And the rich capitalist forces the poor worker to work for the lowest wages."

Every new experience brought him closer to the heart of the problem. Then in 1887 came the Haymarket Affair. The bomb exploded in Haymarket Square and the Chicago militant leaders were cruelly condemned to death. The proud and lofty

behavior of those working class heroes and their comrades led Martí to write pages which are perhaps the most stirring contemporary indictment of the class justice which aimed to drown the great workers' struggle for the 8-hour day in blood.

But let there be no misunderstanding about this. Although Martínez Bello notes a change in his ideas after that crucial date of 1887, Martí's approach to the labor question was, taken as a whole, that of the radical middle class leader, not that of the socialist guide. Although he always placed himself instinctively on the side of the oppressed, he preferred the evolutionary path; *he favored advance by means of progressive reforms, which he believed feasible*. He was aware of the class struggle but seemed anxious to soften it. So, while he honored Karl Marx and saluted his genius, he felt that Marx "went too fast"; he, Martí, wanted "to find an outlet for indignation . . . but without seeing it explode and cause fright." When the Latin-American labor movement of his day—strongly influenced by anarcho-syndicalism—seemed "to explode," he criticized it for its "excesses." He summed up his attitude in his famous letter to Fermín Valdés Domínguez, in which he commended the latter's support of the workers' revolts and excused what he considered incorrect ways of defending the workers' cause; yet at the same time he urged moderation on his friend and advised him to formulate reasonable requests rather than blunt demands.

Is Martí's stature as leader of the revolutionary war against Spain at all lessened because of his ideas on the forms of struggle on the social question? No one would dare assert such a thing. But at that stage the essential thing was emancipation—the basis of any further advance. Martí fully understood that the working class was not only an essential element, but the *main* element in that struggle. He described himself as speaking "before rich and poor, but with more poor in the audience than rich." At that meeting "he affirmed his respect for all doctrines, whatever their names, which sought full enjoyment of human rights, together with respect for the rights of others." And since he recognized that socialism was in the vanguard of those doctrines, he urged its adherents to participate in the common task,

acknowledging, in personal conversation with Enrique Trujillo, that they were "a factor in the independence movement."

This, then, is the simple yet radiant figure of José Martí, as he looms before us on the occasion of his hundredth anniversary. As the complete guide of his time, he understood the central problems which Cuba had to solve and grappled resolutely with them. In short, he was the leader of a national liberation revolution in the period before the great date of November 7, 1917—a revolution carried out in a country in which the working class was not yet numerous enough and did not possess sufficient political maturity to become the leading force. Studying him today, a hundred years after his humble birth, we find Martí much closer to us than other great heroes of American liberty. To be sure, attempts are made to dull his luster. There are those who, like the *Diario de la Marina*,* try to mask their implacable hatred of the volunteers behind clouds of oratorical incense and outpourings of hypocritical tributes; others today urge the treacherous way of autonomism, behind new-fangled ideological trappings; and still others spread the hateful thesis of annexation, concealing it behind the alleged determinism of geography.

If José Martí had bequeathed nothing else but his example of unswerving loyalty to his cause, it would be enough to earn for him the complete devotion of our people and to guarantee his place as the unassailable hero of Cuban history. But, as we have said, Martí did more than that. Aware of the problems that were bound to arise, outlining them with far-sighted vision and laying the foundations for future action, Martí reveals himself today, on this hundredth anniversary, as the *forerunner of our time*.

Martí the Forerunner

MORE THAN anything else, perhaps, it was Martí's penetrating insight that established his political genius on firm foundations. It enabled him to understand that the work of safeguarding

* A leading reactionary Havana daily newspaper.—Ed.

Cuba's independence was not solved merely by expelling the Spanish from the island. Sergio Aguirre, in the magnificent job of editing the special Martí issue of *La Ultima Hora*, helps explain this important aspect of Martí's political thinking. By well-chosen brief excerpts from the vast body of Martí's writings, he has shown how Martí, in the midst of his unceasing fight against Spain, began to understand the dangers of economic domination by the United States. The idea formed within him, until it became a firmly held thesis, that the United States, which had originally come into being as a champion of freedom, had turned into a reactionary avalanche threatening to engulf a weakened and unprepared Latin America. It would be going too far to claim that he saw the economic roots and the precise outlines of that invasion he had begun to fear. That is, he did not grasp the essence of the phenomenon of imperialism, as Lenin analyzed it some twenty years later. But if you follow the course of his thinking in the passages selected by Sergio Aguirre, you will no longer doubt that he realized in all its magnitude the North American danger to the free development of our countries. Here it is no question, as is sometimes the case with outstanding leaders, of a merely intuitive fear. In Martí the idea that all Latin America must guard against the imminent offensive is a fully developed political theory. Reread his articles and letters on the Washington Monetary Conference (1891) and you will find, without further ado, the initial crystallization of this theory. Recall his activity at that time as the Uruguayan representative, his unpleasant encounters with United States officials who were already beginning to display their arrogance. Then you will see how he developed an attitude which was anti-imperialist in essence—and this attitude was subsequently confirmed on each new occasion, without any backsliding. With such rich precedents, we can then assess at its proper value that ominous message he sent to Manuel Mercado on May 18, 1895, a few hours before realizing his desire "to die silently together with the last horse and the last soldier." This was really his political testament, even clearer and more complete than the words he wrote in the significant letter to Federico Henríquez y Carvajal:

"Every day I am in danger of giving my life for my country and for my duty—I know what that is and am determined to accomplish it. My duty is to stop the United States in time from reaching out over the West Indies and from swooping down, with its great power, on our American lands."

Emphasizing that this last sentence was more than a mere rhetorical flourish, Martí declared: "Whatever I did up to now, whatever I shall do, is to that end." Then, revealing to the full his ability as a political strategist who subordinates his propaganda and program to the needs and possibilities of the moment, Martí concluded:

"I have had to keep silent about this and express myself indirectly. There are things which have to be kept under cover if we wish to achieve them. For to speak openly of them as they are would be to create too great difficulties, thus preventing us from attaining our goal."

Can we ask for a more complete avowal of an anti-imperialist attitude? Or a better understanding of the tasks then facing the Cuban revolution?

Today, fifty-eight years later, the Cuban people must put into practice that program which José Martí could not carry through to the end. United States imperialism has reached out over the West Indies and has swooped down on our America. Its aims, moreover, are even more ambitious. Its goal is world domination. Martí anticipated these ideas before the end of the past century when he asserted: "They believe in necessity. Their only law is the barbarous law: 'That will be ours because we need it.'" Having dominated us, they are beginning, as Martí predicted, to use us as pack animals for their aggression against other peoples.

That is why José Martí cannot be for us a revered but remote hero, the hero of a drama long since ended. His lessons are still alive for us; his illuminating advice still useful to us. Julio Antonio Mella knew this when he devoted himself to rescuing Martí from the rantings of loud-mouthed orators and hypocritical celebrations and made Martí a guide in the popular anti-imperialist struggle which he and his comrades carried forward.

That is how we view Martí on his hundredth anniversary. The program he began to develop "in silence and as if indirectly" has become the watchword of his successors. That is why, although certain aspects of his political and social thinking are, as we see, no longer applicable to our day, for the world has taken a different course from the one he romantically dreamed of, nevertheless, the essence of his ideas, the core of anti-imperialism, the lesson of intransigence in preserving our national integrity—these have remained intact and are integrally valid for the revolutionary reality of today. So much so that if his anti-imperialism strikes at the monstrous heart of the enemy, his admirable advice on how Cuba and the other Latin American countries should conduct their foreign policy remains a model for an independent policy that would range us among the peace-loving peoples: "Unity with the world and not with one part of it; not with one part of it against the other."