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The Revolution in its zero hour

By Josué Veloz Serrade, Member of the Editorial Board of La Tizza

Translated by Monika Mokre

The EU's reactions to the Trump administration's imperialist interventions clearly show that most European countries and the European Commission are unwilling to oppose the United States. Widespread protests have only been heard in relation to the plans for Greenland; the kidnapping of the Venezuelan head of state, as well as the war of aggression against Iran, contrary to international law, is mainly negotiated as a fight against dictatorships.

Almost total silence reigns in EU government circles on the tightening of the blockade against Cuba, which has dramatic consequences for the Cuban population's life and survival chances, as well as on the new, as yet rather undefined, threats against Cuba.

We publish here a Cuban text that places the current situation in its historical context and analyzes the Cuban revolution, as well as Cuba's evolution over the last 67 years, based on its different temporalities. The article first appeared in the Cuban Marxist magazine *La Tizza*. We thank *La Tizza* for allowing us to republish and translate it.

The Cuban Revolution can be read as an armed dispute, an ideological confrontation, or a process of profound social transformation. But it can also be thought of from another, less obvious and perhaps more decisive angle, which cuts across all of the above: that of temporality. The disputes over power or over the program to be carried out: whether that of reform, revolution, or imperialism. These are struggles to choose the time that will open up, what rhythm will be altered, and what horizon is conceivable or imaginable. In this sense, the revolution is not only played out on the military or political level, but in a more subtle and persistent war, a war for time.

The assault on the Moncada barracks was conceived by Fidel and his comrades as an act of perfect synchronization[1]. The revolution had to burst into strategic time with the precision of a military clock. Exact coordination, simultaneity, and rational calculation were the fundamental dimensions of a plan that depended on the element of surprise. However, a contingent event disrupted that architecture. The unexpected encounter with the guard undid the planned timeline and opened a moment where reality and its unplannable side prevailed over strategy. At that moment, the linearity of the calculation was fractured.

The revolution then revealed itself to be more than just planning, as a gesture crossed by the unexpected. The time of the unexpected, of recurring chance, disrupts the planned time of the revolution.

The military failure of Moncada did not close off a future perspective; in fact, it inaugurated it. Fidel, by pronouncing "history will absolve me"[2] , shifted chronological time toward a projective historical time. The tactical defeat was transformed, with that discursive gesture, into a symbolic opening.

Chance broke tactical time, but in doing so opened a historical horizon. The revolution was inscribed in a different temporality, where failure is not necessarily a closure, but an opening to the new. The event is then measured not by the real possibility of immediate victory, but by its capacity to establish a new regime of historicity.

In contrast, the action of José Antonio Echeverría and his comrades on March 13, 1957, at Radio Reloj and the Presidential Palace, introduced another dimension of revolutionary time[3] . A radio station is the embodiment of homogeneous, quantified, and disciplinary time – the time of the state, of work, and of modern order. The station constantly marks the time and synchronizes the community to a rhythm that is shared by all. When José Antonio interrupted that cadence with a political message, he caused a suspension of regular, homogeneous time. The systematic chronological flow was interrupted by the revolutionary word. We could say with Benjamin that "the now" burst into empty and homogeneous time. The attack on Radio Reloj was an act of symbolic appropriation of time. An event was introduced into the clock, and the regularity of state time was suspended for a moment.

In this way, two revolutionary temporalities are drawn. Moncada shows us the fragility of strategic calculation in the face of the emergence of the contingent. Radio Reloj revealed the need to intervene in the daily time of the people. The former was part of the logic of the military plan that was disrupted by chance. The second was also part of the logic of chronometric time interrupted by the word. Moncada failed tactically, but it opened a historical time, a new horizon. Radio Reloj suspended homogeneous time. Both gestures reveal that for a revolution, disputing power is also a dispute over the temporal regime itself.

The intervention on Radio Reloj was based on the fact that listeners pay attention to the time. Radio Reloj works because people are synchronized, because they listen to the time, because they share a temporal community. The revolution of the March 13 attackers presupposed subjects regulated by the clock, subjects who inhabit a modern and disciplinary temporality. To intervene in Radio Reloj was to intervene in that temporal subjectivity. The revolution confronted the state in terms of power, and that also meant challenging the temporal regime that organized daily life. There is a gesture that unites the Moncada attackers with those of Radio Reloj in the magma of events: the refusal to submit to the time of domination.

Thinking of the Cuban Revolution as a temporal production allows us to understand its moments of openness and its moments of decline in a different light. These are moments to resist and to move forward, but also to sustain a form of time that does not coincide with the time imposed by the dominant order.

We know this from history: where strategic calculation failed, an event could arise that reordered the historical sequence. Where the clock imposed its regularity, a word could burst in and suspend it, breaking it from within. At this intersection between contingency and symbolic intervention, the persistence or exhaustion of the revolutionary process is at stake. History is not a neutral stage where pre-existing forces unfold with a pre-determined outcome; it is the very field where it is decided what time we live in and what time we are willing to open up, and for which we are willing to fight.

In Cuba's current crisis, these scenes take on a particular resonance. Strategic time seems exhausted; the promises of planning face the contingency of scarcity and disillusionment. Chronometric time

becomes unbearable, marked by endless queues, constant waiting, the repetition of a present that does not seem to open up the future. The revolution finds itself caught between the randomness that disrupts strategy and the discipline of the clock that regulates daily life.

The question is whether the revolution can still open up a historical time, whether it can still suspend homogeneous time, whether it can still produce an event that shifts chronology toward a horizon of expectation. Imperialism knows all this, like a time-devouring beast.

Thinking about the relationship between time and revolution in Cuba implies recognizing that there is no politics without temporality. Revolution is a project of power only if it is capable of disputing time.

Moncada and Radio Reloj were scenes that showed how the revolution was inscribed in the fracture of planned time and in the interruption of chronometric time. The current crisis demands that we rethink that relationship. The people remain attentive to time, but time opposes them as a blocked present.

If the revolution wants to survive, it must once again contest the temporal regime; it must reopen a future, even in the midst of the most appalling crisis.

The time that the Cuban Revolution is going through today cannot be reduced to economic figures or diplomatic negotiations. It is, above all, a temporal experience that marks the entire collective life. It is a time of external blockade, as never before, which not only limits resources but also compresses horizons. It is also a time of internal exhaustion that is measured not only in statistics but also in the accumulated wear and tear on bodies and

subjectivities. It is a time of symbolic fragmentation where the narratives that once gave meaning no longer manage to sustain the same intensity, in the midst of an era where non-narrative seems to reign, of a geopolitical order where everything is affected by the narcissistic pragmatism of the great powers, where Gaza or Cuba are only interchangeable pawns, objects of abandonment; and, above all, it is a time when the future appears uncertain, blurred, less evident than in other stages of Cuban history.

When the future loses its clarity, the present becomes heavy and unbearable. Everyday life begins to organize itself around urgency, survival, and immediate calculation. The greatest risk is not the crisis itself, but that this crisis will stabilize as a form of experience and that the only possible way out will be the one defined for us by the dominant order: a time of infinite reform towards capitalism, the time of dissolution that imperialism wants to impose on us, to definitively close the symbolic time that opened on July 26, 1953, and return us to the everyday time of modernity, from which we were able to escape on March 13, 1957.

They want the country to remain trapped in a perpetual present of resistance without a horizon. Resisting without planning may be necessary at certain times, but if it becomes permanent, it erodes historical energy. On January 1, 1959, those two times came together, and from that day on, resisting also meant glimpsing a historical horizon; in other words, there is no resistance without a plan. The real temporary defeat would not only be the fall of the government or the collapse of a specific policy, but the impossibility of imagining and producing another time. And all those who promote the invasion of Cuba or total submission to the Master's order should know this. This would lead to the total closure of any possibility of a messianic time or any verifiable utopia. It would be a fall without redemption.

Survive or submit

Does surviving this moment require more than just managing scarcity? This is a deeply political question because it forces us to decide what kind of time we want to inhabit. Reactivating projective time does not mean repeating slogans or invoking an abstract future. It means re-producing a credible narrative that articulates present sacrifice with real transformation. When the horizon of expectation shrinks, politics becomes the management of the immediate. Recovering historical direction implies rebuilding confidence that current efforts are part of a meaningful process, not an indefinite wait.

But the horizon is not reactivated with words alone. Intervening in everyday time is equally decisive. When daily life is reduced to the management of shortages, time is experienced as a process of attrition. Breaking this repetition requires concrete transformations in daily experience, real spaces for participation, shared decisions, tangible improvements that alter the perception of the social rhythm.

It is a matter of grand heroic gestures and also of modifying the texture of the present so that it no longer feels immobile. Politics also plays out in the way the day is organized, in the possibility that routine is not just waiting, but also the opening up of the new.

Cuban history shows that aggression can be turned into symbolic production. Where the blockade sought to shut down the process, social creativity, economic reorganization, and identity reaffirmation took place; the 1990s are proof of this.

Imperialist aggression does not automatically determine the outcome; it can become a laboratory if there is the political will

and organizational capacity to transform limitation into momentum. This is one of the factors of our uniqueness that imperialism ignores because it unconsciously despises it. The crisis can be a dead end or fertile ground for invention, depending on how collective time is managed.

All of this leads to a broader formulation: the Cuban Revolution is not only facing an economic or geopolitical crisis, nor even a mere crisis of temporal limitation due to the actions of imperialism; it is facing a crisis of temporality, which we have experienced time and again throughout history. It is not enough to resolve material variables if collective time continues to be experienced as stagnation. The survival of the process depends on its ability to reactivate those events that at other times opened up the future and interrupted normality. It is not a question of repeating the past, but of recovering the power to produce one's own time: revolutionary time.

Revolution as a temporal opening

Revolution as temporal production operates on three levels. First, there is the symbolic level, when it constitutes the opening of a new horizon. Second, when it breaks with everyday, disciplinary, and state time. And third, there is the opening of a strategic time, which enables a dispute over historical timing, the dispute over the "moment." How do these temporalities operate today?

There is a brief but decisive dialogue that the historian Reinhart Koselleck developed with Hans Blumenberg around a question that seems scholarly but in reality affects the very heart of political modernity: is modern philosophy of history a simple secularization of Christian theology or is it a radical break with it?

Karl Löwith had argued that modern ideas of progress, emancipation, and revolution are nothing more than a secular translation of the Christian structure of salvation history. Blumenberg, on the other hand, argued that modernity did not live off borrowings from theology, but rather represented an unprecedented self-assertion of human beings in the face of the world. Koselleck, without taking a simplistic stance, is closer to Löwith's intuition. He does not believe that we can so easily detach modern concepts from the theological sediments that formed them.

In the Christian tradition, history has a clear architecture. There is creation, fall, redemption, and an ultimate end, embodied in the idea of the apocalypse that gives meaning to the entire journey. It is a linear time, oriented and with a precise end. Modernity, according to Koselleck, does not destroy this structure; it transforms it. The theological remains, but as an invisible remnant. Where once the moment of the Last Judgment was expected, now the definitive revolution is projected, like that slogan so often used in the liturgy of communist parties: it is the final struggle. Instead of waiting for the Kingdom of God, now an emancipated society is promised. The idea of salvation is transformed into the idea of historical progress. God is displaced from that sequence, but the form of the narrative remains. History continues to have a direction, tensions, moments of crisis, and expected outcomes.

That is why Koselleck asserts that the modern concept of revolution still contains the theological expectation of the end of time. Revolution is not only a sudden political change, but the promise of a radical end to unjust history and the inauguration of a new order. In classical Marxism, this appeared clearly. The development of the productive forces and the contradictions of

capitalism would necessarily lead to its overcoming. Revolution would be the immanent result of historical laws.

Divine providence was replaced by historical necessity, but the eschatological structure persisted. Man takes the place that once belonged to God and attributes to himself the ability to lead the process to its culmination. As in Marx's *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*: "For man, however, the root is man himself."

Even the modern idea of acceleration has apocalyptic antecedents. In the Christian tradition, before the end, events intensify and time seems to rush by. Modernity takes up this intuition but turns it into a program with a measurable and predictable horizon. Progress accelerates history, technology compresses time frames, and politics seeks to manage this increasing pace. The difference is decisive: it is no longer God who shortens time, but man who attempts to govern it. The modern revolution does not wait for the end, it plans it, it attempts to impose its own order on it.

This framework is fundamental to thinking about the Cuban Revolution. From its inception, it has been part of a horizon where history becomes a court of law and at the same time institutes a promise. When Fidel affirms that history will absolve him, he is shifting immediate judgment to a future that will give meaning to the present defeat. There is a confidence that the historical process has direction and that the current sacrifice will be justified in a later culmination. The idea of inevitability, of an irreversible process, of a progressive course toward socialism, fits with the modern structure that Koselleck described.

However, the present today introduces a tension. If time is experienced today as blocked, without progressive acceleration or a clear horizon, then what is in crisis is not just an economic or

geopolitical situation. The very form of modern temporality that sustained revolutionary expectation is in crisis. A necessary outcome no longer seems guaranteed. The future does not present itself as a sure culmination, but as an uncertain, contested field. The question becomes more radical because it affects the symbolic basis of the process.

If the modern revolution inherited the form of the Christian Apocalypse, replacing God with history and salvation with progress, what happens when faith in progress weakens? Is it possible to produce revolutionary temporality without the promise of a definitive end that redeems the journey? How can the revolutionary horizon be sustained when its symbolic temporality seems to be coming to an end?

Perhaps the survival of an emancipatory project does not depend solely on confidence in a guaranteed culmination, but on the ability to sustain partial openings, to produce meaning in contingency, to create a future without relying on secular eschatology. Therefore, this apparent time of closure can also be a time of openings in the opposite sense.

If the Cuban Revolution was born under the horizon of an eschatological modernity, today it faces the challenge of reinventing its relationship with time. The question is not only how to resist, but how to produce history when the narrative of the promised end no longer operates with the same force. Therein lies the possibility of a new form of revolutionary temporality.

Redemption in the fall

It can be said that every great historical event has moments when it seems to fall apart, moments when the imagined future vanishes

and continuity is broken, when it is not possible to determine whether it will last or not. However, there are figures and episodes that show another possibility: that history is not only lived in horizons of arrival, but also in points in time where it is decided not to give in to the gravitational pull of the fall.

In Cuba, this logic appears in various forms throughout the revolutionary trajectory. Already in Martí, there was that intuition of "preventing in time," which was not a passive calculation, but an ethical gesture that would avert catastrophe before collapse occurred[4] . An ethic of time that would not wait for the end but would act at the decisive moment.

Modernity imposed on us the measurement of history as a linear process, but for Martí, time has a preventive, almost moral quality: to act before history drags us into the abyss. He was the first counter-modern thinker in temporal terms. He was not only referring to stopping the fateful course of modern events. He did not only feel called upon to prevent the United States from annexing Cuba in order to subjugate the entire Antilles "with that extra force." He wanted to open up another time, the time of the revolution.

That same temporal dislocation reappears in Fidel's famous phrase after the assault on Moncada, when, in the face of military defeat, he declares that history will absolve him. The fall does not close time; rather, it displaces it. The immediate tribunal of failure is postponed to a historical judgment that does not yet exist as a fact, but which will be an event full of meaning. In that gesture, there was no simple confidence in the future, nor mechanical calculation; there was a deep-rooted subjective decision to sustain time open beyond the here and now of defeat. Its lesson is that defeat is not accepted as closure, but as a space where another time can

germinate. A time in which the fall is transformed into a restart, without depending on external conditions of force or the usual power correlations.

In 1989, when the socialist camp collapsed, many anticipated the end of the Cuban Revolution. The grand narratives of historical progress seemed to vanish with the fall of the Berlin Wall, and with them the certainty of an inevitable horizon. The only thing that seemed inevitable was defeat. But Fidel introduced another temporal gamble in his slogan "even if we are left alone." That phrase is not an eschatological promise; it is a declaration of fidelity to the revolutionary event that does not wait for the world to confirm its meaning. The revolution continues not because a promised future is certain, but because the active decision to remain turns a time of crisis into a time of its own, a sovereign time.

This gesture finds symbolic expression and continuity in the events of January 3, 2026, when 32 Cuban military personnel died during the U.S. invasion of Venezuela while defending President Nicolás Maduro and his partner Cilia Flores. Far from interpreting these events as a technical or strategic defeat, the people have experienced them as an act of dignity, solidarity, and resistance in the face of imperialist aggression. From an exclusively military point of view, such an episode is a defeat, in that the Cuban and Venezuelan forces failed to prevent Maduro's capture and the number of casualties was high. But seen from the temporal logic of revolutions, that sacrifice transcends the logic of mere effectiveness, as it introduces a sacrificial temporality where the fall itself becomes an affirmation of revolutionary meaning, even if the correlation of forces says otherwise.

This type of temporality is not merely aspirational, nor does it depend on automatic progress toward universal emancipation, as proposed by the secular eschatology of historical modernity. It is something different: it is the emergence of redemption within the fall itself.

The revolution, we say, can produce temporal openness not only when it triumphs, but also when it does not yield to the time of the fall. The fall—that litany of material and symbolic defeats—often closes or shuts down horizons, but it can also be the terrain where another kind of time is introduced, where history is not determined by external objectivity, but by the ethical and political decision to sustain the event. In other words, the revolution is not just an accumulation of technical victories, but a temporal practice that redefines what can still happen within the fall itself.

This has profound implications for thinking about the continuity of the Cuban historical project. It is not a matter of clinging to an idea of an inevitable future or of recalling heroic moments from other eras, but of recognizing that the production of historical meaning can also occur in resistance, in fidelity, and in the ability to sustain time in the face of adverse conditions. This gesture allows the revolution to continue to be time, not just memory or repetition. Thus, history is not reduced to a succession of given events but becomes the space where political decision-making and lived experience produce new meanings for the future, even in the heart of what is presented to us as an inevitable fall.

The inauguration of a historical setback

The current crisis does not mark the end of revolutionary time, but rather the limit of a previous form of temporality. If in the early

years the revolution was experienced as a heroic time, concentrated and led by a vanguard, today the possibility of a future can only be opened if the people lead a radical expansion of participation, a real decentralization of power, and an effective protagonism of the majorities.

In that case, the revolution ceases to be merely a foundational event and becomes a permanent constituent process. The key is to recognize that revolution produces time when it produces subjects. But those subjects cannot be fixed in a rigid structure. If the people are not real protagonists, time becomes bureaucratized, repetitive, an endless wait. The new temporal opening of the Cuban Revolution can only come about through the effective constitution of the people as active historical subjects at all levels of decision-making.

When the people do not participate fully, time is experienced as resistance without a way out, as crisis management and a kind of waiting without a horizon. When the people become active as subjects, time is experienced as creation, as decision, as an opening toward the impossible. The difference is radical. Redemption ceases to be only sacrifice and becomes self-government. It is not a matter of enduring the fall, but of producing new forms of political life. Loyalty is no longer measured by the ability to endure defeat, but by the ability to invent institutions and everyday practices that sustain a shared future, even within the prevailing climate of defeat.

This shift implies an inevitable tension. If the people are to make all decisions, from the highest to the lowest spheres, this requires a real transformation of structures. And all transformation involves risk. Temporary openness is never orderly; it always introduces instability. But without that instability, there is no production of time. The revolution, in its origin, was precisely an irruption that

disrupted the established order. Today, the continuity of that gesture requires accepting that the people, by becoming a full historical subject, will generate new forms of disorder that are a condition of possibility for a different time, one that is antagonistic to imperialism.

The current crisis is overcome by expanding socialist democracy. The revolution is not extinguished in the crisis; it is redefined in it. The people, by taking all decisions into their own hands, become producers of time. And that time is not only chronological or strategic, it is historical in the deepest sense, because it opens horizons that were previously closed.

The revolution is played out in the possibility to transform the crisis into a laboratory, to turn the limitations of the present into momentum, to make instability fertile ground for invention, to unleash the greatest possible creative force. The temporal opening that is demanded is not an abstract gesture; it is the concrete practice of people who decide, to participate and to create. When the people assume real decision-making capacity at all levels, time changes its texture, appearing as creation, as a form of shared leadership, and as an effective opening to the future. Revolution is, in addition to heroic memory, a living form of social organization. The most delicate question is whether socialism can assume this uncertainty as a condition of vitality and not as a threat to its own continuity.

Imperialism knows this and dominates the fourth phase: that of utopian closure, which would be the definitive end of the history of the Cuban revolution through invasion—surgical or large-scale—through negotiated submission, or through reforms. They want us to abandon not only our historical past, but also our capacity to invent the future.

Imperialism has all the options at its disposal; it can even coexist with a revolution in tatters that survives in rhetoric but not in deeds: its plan would be fulfilled anyway. The capitalist unconscious of this world also knows this and even prefers Cuba to fall. It is a cruel irony of this time of closure that what has been called for years "the empire in decline" is brutally showing everyone the subjugation of a world, of an entire geopolitical order that turns its back on Cuba: "we will help Cuba according to our capabilities," "according to our possibilities," that is, to the extent that the "empire in decline" allows us to.

Cuba, we know, is now living in a time of "zero option." Zero time, which is infinite time.

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[1] After Fulgencio Batista came to power in 1952 through a military coup, a group of resistance fighters led by Fidel Castro began the struggle against Batista with the assault on the Moncada barracks on July 26, 1953. The attack failed, 60 revolutionaries were captured, and some of them were tortured and executed. Fidel and Raúl Castro were also among those who were imprisoned.

[2] Fidel Castro's speech before the military tribunal after the failed assault on the Moncada barracks.

[3] José Antonio Echeverría was a member of the University Student Federation and its clandestine branch, the Directorio Revolucionario. On March 13, 1957, he led an attack on the Presidential Palace and later occupied Radio Reloj, where he broadcast the false news of Batista's death. He was shot dead in the ensuing clashes at the University of Havana.

[4] José Martí, a fighter for Cuban independence in the late 19th century, rightly feared that Cuba's independence from the Spanish colonial empire would lead to domination by US imperialism and opposed these threats with a republican scenario.