
Reviewed by Marcos Antonio da Silva and Gabriel Dourado Rocha

The 60th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution was marked by numerous celebrations and events around the planet, demonstrating its importance and transcendence, and especially by numerous debates, reflections and analyses that sought to discuss the meaning, dynamics and current challenges that mark this process.

These reflections sought to deepen various elements of the Cuban revolutionary process considering, among others, two fundamental aspects. On the one hand, they sought to understand the nature and development of such a process, incorporating historical elements that allow us to observe its impacts, contradictions and limits in the most diverse dimensions of contemporary Cuban society (art, politics, economics, culture, education). On the other hand, the debates sought to discuss the current situation of Cuban socialism, seeking to understand its specific characteristics, its transformations and, especially, its current conditions and challenges for the maintenance of revolutionary ideals.

In spite of its worldwide breadth, such a debate, while considering various perspectives, has not always, for countless reasons, involved the presence of visions and voices of Cuban intellectuals. This work fills an important gap because it was coordinated by Luis Suárez Salazar, one of the most important contemporary Cuban intellectuals. It presents the work of eight well-known Cuban authors, plus that of three Latin American authors who have a deep understanding of the Island and its current reality.

In addition, the work was published by the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO), which has sought to boost and disseminate Latin
American critical thinking by inaugurating the series ‘Forums’, which aims to publish debates and reflections derived from its events. This is the result of several roundtables organised at its eighth Conference and the First World Forum on Critical Thinking, held in Buenos Aires in late 2018. Reading this work it is possible to see that the reflections can be grouped according to three fundamental axes.

The first axis refers to the political, economic and social conditions that characterise Cuban socialism, emphasising its internal and current reality. The first chapter in this collection is part of this group, the essay by Georgina Alfonso González, “La democracia en Cuba: algunos retos de la actualización del modelo socialista” (‘Democracy in Cuba: some challenges to updating the socialist model’). Her work discusses how the country has sought to develop a model of participatory and protagonist democracy and to boost collective and solidarity values, to the detriment of contemporary hyperindividualism. The following chapter by José Luis Rodríguez García, “Notas sobre la economía cubana y latino-americana: sesenta años después del triunfo de la Revolución” (“Notes on the Cuban and Latin American economies: sixty years after the Revolution’s triumph”), likewise is part of this first group. His essay presents a compelling analysis of the development of the Cuban economy, considering the period and the most relevant indicators. From this, he develops a comparative analysis with the other Latin American countries, showing the similarity of the economic dynamics, and Cuba’s emphasis on social elements (spending and politics) as a feature distinguishing it in the region. A third member of this group is the chapter by Ramón Pihs Madruga, “La transición socialista cubana: una mirada a sus dimensiones científicas y socioambientales” (“The Cuban socialist transition: a look at its scientific and social environmental dimensions”). In this essay the author discusses the relationship between science, the environment and development in the country. He emphasises how sustainable development can be incorporated into these both socially and environmentally, and then discusses the country’s actions and its adaptations to global climate change. Finally, although it is in the final part of the book, we can include in this group the work by María Isabel Domínguez, “Las dinámicas generacionales en Cuba: el lugar y el papel de las juventudes” (“The generational dynamics in Cuba: the place and role of youth”). This chapter discusses the population dynamics of the Island, the ageing process and the generational transition. It demonstrates the need for the development of consistent public policies and the empowerment of Cuban youth, as important elements for the continuity of the revolutionary process.

The second axis concerns foreign policy and the projection, action, and international ties of the Cuban Revolution, especially in relation to Latin America. The first work in this group is by Isabel Allende Karam, director of the Higher
Institute of International Relations (ISRI), titled “La política exterior de la Revolución cubana: una mirada a su universalidade y sus diferentes dimensiones” (“The foreign policy of the Cuban Revolution: a look at its universality and its different dimensions”). This chapter takes stock of revolutionary Cuban foreign policy, discussing the principles and priorities that guided it, its unified conduct in defence of sovereignty and self-determination, the misperceptions about it, and its third-world and Latin American character as a fundamental trait. Next, the text by Luis Suárez Salazar, “La proyección externa de la Revolución cubana en América Latina y el Caribe: una aproximación en sus sesenta aniversarios” (“The external impact of the Cuban Revolution in Latin America and the Caribbean: an evaluation on its sixtieth anniversary”). This chapter by the work’s coordinator develops a logical-historical synthesis of the international impact of the Cuban Revolution. It focuses on its relationship and ties based on solidarity with Latin America (Nuestra América), and how the process of updating the Cuban model allows the continuity and deepening of such regional impact. The third work in this group is the essay by Marco Antonio Guandásegui (hijo) which analyses the impact of the Cuban Revolution on Latin America, “El impacto de la Revolución Cubana sobre América Latina: “Solo sabemos que lo imposible es posible” (“The impact of the Cuban Revolution on Latin America: “we only know that the impossible is possible”). This chapter discusses the conditions shared throughout Latin America that allow us to understand the Revolution’s impressive impact on the region in its early years, as well as its current validity, which derives from the desire for national (or regional) liberation, and the formation of societies based on solidarity and social justice. The final chapter in this group is by the Argentine Julio Gambina, titled “Consideraciones sobre la experiencia de la Revolución cubana: una mirada desde el Sur” (“Considerations on the experience of the Cuban Revolution: a view from the South”). This essay discusses the relevance of the Cuban experience, in order to understand the potentials and limits of the processes of social transformation. From this and based on Mariátegui, it reconsiders the debates on socialism and the transition, and more broadly on social change, in this new century, in the context of the current specific characteristics of Latin America.

The final axis relates to the influence and legacy of the main intellectual references (Jose Martí), or the political and intellectual leaders of the process (Che Guevara and Fidel Castro). The first work in this group is by Pedro Pablo Rodríguez, titled “Martí y la revolución del pensamiento: hacia una nueva cultura” (“Martí and the revolution of thought: toward a new culture”). This essay discusses the originality and scope of the thought of José Martí, its Latin American nature as opposed to the colonial and Eurocentric mentality and its role as a fundamental source of the revolutionary process and of inspiration and
development of an emancipatory cultural policy appropriate to Cuba and Nuestra America. The second work in this final group is by Maria del Carmen Ariet García, director of the Che Guevara Study Center, titled “Del pensamiento y actuar del Che: validez y transcendência” ("On the thought of, and acting on, Che: validity and transcendence"). This chapter analyses Che’s presence and performance in the construction of Cuban socialism. It discusses his importance in the different stages of the Cuban revolutionary process, and points to his innovative conception of Marxism as an integral and critical system of social transformation, in which moral and social consciousness (along with solidarity and example) stand out as fundamental elements for such a process. The final work in this third group is by the Mexican researcher Josefina Morales, titled “Pensamiento y legado de una imensidad histórica: presentación de Yo soy Fidel” ("Thought and legacy of a historical immensity: presenting Yo soy Fidel"). This essay discusses the book by John Saxe-Fernández (Yo soy Fidel: pensamiento y legado de una imensidad histórica), and presents and analyses the various statements of the intellectuals who contributed to that work, demonstrating the relevance and validity of Fidel Castro’s thinking for the development of the Cuban Revolution.

Cuba en revolución presents a deep and updated reflection on the Cuban Revolution. It promotes a multidimensional evaluation, based on a historical approach and a comparative analysis in relation to Latin America, and has a focus determined by the important data and up-to-date analysis that it presents. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that, due to the breadth and complexity of such a theme and the transcendence of the Cuban Revolution, some themes and elements could not be properly contemplated or deepened, which indicates the need for continuing this debate.

In any case, this is a fundamental work for understanding the nature and dynamics of the Cuban revolutionary process and, especially, its current reality, developing a sober and profound evaluation of the 60 years of the Cuban Revolution. It allows us to understand this reality and, above all, understand it as part of the Cuban and Latin American intelligentsia observing and analysing the transformations that the country has experienced or is experiencing, and how this will affect the future of the largest island of the Caribbean.