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Hace poco fui invitado por el cónsul general de Martinica, Miguel Oviedo, para dictar una conferencia magistral en la Universidad de las Antillas, sobre tres líderes anticoloniales con lo han sido Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon y Hugo Chávez Frías.

Estuvimos acompañado del venezolanista martiniqueño Doctor Maurice Belrose, gran conocedor de la literatura venezolana así como de intelectuales y movimientos sociales anticoloniales de Martinica, Guyana y Guadalupe, aún calificadas como Departamento de Ultramar o "regiones"

Antes de la rebelión de Haití en 1791, ya estas tierras de la Laghia, la beguine y el zouk, habían sido sacudidas por los esclavizados que se levantaron contra el colonialismo francés a mediados de 1789 coincidiendo con la llamada revolución francesa bajo los principios libertad, igualdad y fraternidad, pero que esos principios no llegaron a las colonias francesas del Caribe y de tierra firme. Las rebeliones de Martinica, Guadalupe y Guyana resonaron en otras Islas, sobre todo en Haití, que en 1791 se inició una insurrección indetenible donde el descendiente del reino de Allada (antiguo Dahomey-hoy Benin), Toussaint Louverture y quien llegó a ser general, dirigió el proceso de independencia que luego coronaría triunfante Jean Jacques Dessalines el 1ro. de enero de 1804. Parte de la historia ya la conocemos, la independencia de Haití eliminó la deshumanizante trata negrera, abolió la vergonzante esclavitud y propuso un modelo de independencia distinto al estadounidense, al modelo francés y diferente a las incipientes independencias de los blancos criollos en América Latina. Pero eso le costó muy caro a Haití posteriormente, pues quedó aislado diplomáticamente, religiosamente por el concordato Romano y ni siquiera los nuevos países independientes a los cuales Haití ayudó, no salieron en su defensa. La estrategia colonial francesa se vengó por ese atrevimiento. Creo que con Haití se ensayó la impronta de la FRANCÍÁFRICA.

El cimarronaje activo, inspiración para Césaire

La experiencia de las rebeliones de los esclavizados-cimarrones, se convirtieron en un sedimento histórico para que a mediados de los años 30 del siglo XX, emergiera un contestatario severamente crítico del colonialismo. Se trata de Aimé Césaire quien expresó una vez “hay en mí algo de cimarrón” y quien creó el término negritud para oponerlo a la asimilación y discriminación cultural francesa. Negritud combinado con su militancia en el partido comunista franceses le daría una consistencia ideológica en su lucha en las entrañas del monstruo el departamento de ultramar. “Lo que yo quiero es que el marxismo y el comunismo sean puesto al servicio de los pueblos negros y no los hombres negros al servicio del marxismo y del comunismo. Que la doctrina y el movimiento se hagan para los hombres y no los hombres para la doctrina y para el movimiento”. La ruptura con un marxismo ortodoxo y su “carta de renuncia a Maurice Thorez”, presidente del Partido comunista francés, no significó la renuncia a su lucha revolucionaria y anticolonial. “Entre colonizador y colonizado y colonizado no hay lugar sino para la servidumbre, la intimidación, la presión, los policías, el impuesto, el robo, la violación, las culturas obligatorias, el menosprecio, la desconfianza, la altanería, la suficiencia, la grosería de elites descerebralizadas y masas envilecidas. Hablo de millares de hombres en los que se hábilmente se ha inculcado el miedo, el complejo de inferioridad, el temblor, el arrodillamiento, la desesperación, el lacayismo”.

Contra la violencia colonial, violencia anticolonial: Fanon

La prosecución de la lucha contra el colonialismo y sus formas perversas, tomarían un sentido más militante y compromiso con las armas en las manos para atravesar el Atlántico en la lucha por la liberación de Argelia contra el colonialismo francés. Se trata del martiniqueño y médico psiquiatra Frantz Fanon (1925-1961), el autor de Piel negra, máscaras blancas, quien también va a analizar la trilogía colonialismo-racismo y endorracismo, partiendo de las barreras del “miedo” introyectado en el ser humano “negro” o afrodescendientes como decidimos llamarnos a partir de la Conferencia Mundial contra el racismo, realizada en Durban en el año 2001.

Expresaba Fanon: “Quiero decir por ejemplo, que a menudo el enemigo del negro no es el blanco, sino su propio congénere. Antes de 1939, el antillano se decía feliz o al menos creía serlo. Votaba e iba a la escuela cuando podía, seguía las procesiones, amaba el ron y bailaba beguine. Los que tenían el privilegio de ir a Francia hablaban de París; de París, es decir, de Francia. Y los que no tenía el privilegio de conocer París se dejaban ilusionar... En todo antillano, antes de la guerra de 1939, no solo había la certidumbre de una superioridad sobre el africano, sino de una diferencia fundamental. El africano era un negro y el antillano un europeo”.

En Argelia se incorporó al Frente por la Liberación de Argelia. Decía “Esta violencia del régimen colonial no es solamente sobre el plano del alma, sino también en los músculos, en la sangre...esta violencia provocó irremediablemente el nacimiento de una violencia interior en el pueblo colonizado”, esta fue unas de las últimas cartas de Fanon antes de su muerte en 1961 a causa de la leucemia.

Chávez relee a Césaire y a Fanon

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Tanto el planteamiento poético-político-cultural de Césaire y la teoría sobre el colonialismo-racismo-endorracismo y contra violencia de Fanon, sigue siendo una propuesta vigente tanto para los países que aún siguen en situación colonial y en los países que decidimos tomar un rumbo distinto al capitalismo, neoliberalismo y antimperialismo. Nuestro presidente Chávez fue muy claro e insistente en recuperar nuestra soberanía, en la lucha contra el imperialismo, así como la inclusión de afrodescendientes en sus políticas públicas y en la mirada hacia África: “sequemos, con el fuego sagrado de nuestras conciencia, las lágrimas de África, las lágrimas de América Latina. Con el fuego sagrado e nuestro coraje y voluntad patria, para que junto con el fuego sagrado del amor de nuestros pueblos, el llanto de nuestros siglos regrese hecho lluvia para comenzar la siembra del siglo XXI”.

Césaire, Fanon y Chávez se encuentran a través del tiempo, sin proponérselo, en la corriente más avanzadas del siglo XX por la construcción de una sociedad justa, antirracista, anticolonial y antimperialista.

Fuente: ALAI-AMLATINA

Iran Contra revisited: The CIA-drug connection and the Puerto Rican witness
Carmelo Ruiz-Marrero / Agencia Latinoamericana de Información

Iran Contra was the biggest political scandal of the 1980's. It was actually two interlocking scandals caused by the disclosure of two different US covert operations in two very different parts of the world.

The first of these operations was the illegal sale of advanced weaponry to Iran, a country that in the official Washington discourse was considered (back then as well as today) an enemy and a terrorist nation. The second, equally illegal, operation was the use of the profits from those arms sales to Iran to fund a stateless mercenary army in Central America known as the contras, which were fighting the revolutionary Sandinista government in Nicaragua.

Very few news readers, even the most knowledgeable observers of the Iran Contra affair, ever learned of the unusual role of a Puerto Rican woman in the revelations about the contra supply operation, known by the alias of “Wanda Doe”. A resident of the Puerto Rican municipality of Bayamón, Wanda Palacio worked in the early 1980's for Colombia's Medellín Cartel, and

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claimed direct knowledge of the cartel's dealings with the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the contras. She says she witnessed in 1983 and in 1985 in Barranquilla, Colombia, the arrival of CIA airplanes loaded with weapons for the cartel, which would then send them to the contras. The planes would return to the US loaded with Colombian cocaine. They were clearly identified as belonging to Southern Air Transport (SAT), an airline that had been a CIA front from 1960 to 1973 (1). Wanda says that cartel kingpin Jorge Ochoa himself explained to her the guns-for-drugs deal with the CIA to supply the contras.

In 1986 Wanda broke with the cartel and seeking help and protection she brought her testimony to rookie US Senator John Kerry, who back then headed a subcommittee that had just opened an investigation into allegations of contra wrongdoing. Kerry and his staff had received information that indicated that the contras were receiving weapons from the USA, which Congress had expressly forbidden. However, Wanda's testimony went way beyond what they ever imagined.

On September 26 Kerry delivered Wanda's testimony, an 11-page "proffer", to Assistant US Attorney William Weld. On October 3 Weld informed Kerry that he rejected her testimony due to some minor contradictions in it. Wanda's tale would have ended right there had it not been for the fact that two days later the Sandinistas shot down a Fairchild C-123K Southern Air Transport plane loaded with weapons flying over Nicaraguan airspace. This was the incident that detonated the Iran Contra scandal. Wanda had been corroborated if only halfway: SAT was indeed flying arms to the contras.

A few days after the plane crash, Wanda was in Kerry's office when the face of the plane's dead pilot, Wallace Sawyer, appeared on a TV screen. She told the senator's staff that he was the pilot of the SAT plane she saw in Barranquilla in 1985. Naturally, they took her words with skepticism.

At this point, journalist Robert Parry, then with Associated Press, entered the picture:

"I had flown to Managua (Nicaragua) for the AP after the crash and had gained access to Sawyer's flight logs that had been aboard the plane. Sawyer had written down the airport codes of the cities he had visited as well as the tail numbers of the planes he had flown. When I returned to Washington, I deciphered the IDs of the sometime obscure airports where Sawyer had landed. I also cross-checked the tail numbers with federal aviation records which identify the owners of the plane.

"Sawyer had scribbled down three entries for Oct. 2, 4 and 6, 1985, listing himself flying a Southern Air transport plane into Barranquilla, just as Palacio had alleged. Yet, despite the corroboration -- and a supportive polygraph exam -- Weld still rejected Palacio. Her fate was similar to other witnesses who dared to link the contras, the CIA and cocaine." (2)

Wanda Palacio, her extraordinary testimony and its corroboration were forgotten. The Puerto Rican press covered her story briefly. El Mundo did a cover story on her, and journalist Beatriz de la Torre wrote about her for The San Juan Star, but that was pretty much it. In her 1987 book on contra drug dealing *Out of Control*, author Leslie Cockburn makes no mention of Wanda,

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and in its final report on its investigation, Drugs, Law Enforcement and Foreign Policy, Kerry's subcommittee barely mentions her in passing.

I interviewed Wanda in the fall of 1989 for a term paper I was writing for a class in the Humanities faculty of the University of Puerto Rico. I do not remember the course's name but I do remember the professor was Luis Agrait. The contact with Wanda was made possible through her attorney Charles Hey-Maestre, who was representing her at the Puerto Rican Civil Rights Institute (IPDC). That paper I wrote became the basis for a longer monograph about the CIA, which the UPR Social Sciences Journal published in 1992 (3). This research led to my first journalistic articles for the local progressive weekly Claridad.

At the time of our first meeting Wanda was already yesterday's news, living in anonymity and trying to piece her life back together. The world had lost interest in the whole contra story. The war in Nicaragua was ending, and so was the cold war. Even progressive organizations and their funders were now looking elsewhere. Wanda and I remained in touch for years to come but I have not heard from her since 2001.

Other characters in this story did very well after the Iran Contra debacle. Kerry went on to become Democrat presidential candidate in 2004 and is now secretary of state. Weld became Republican Massachusetts governor for two terms, and in 1996 he unsuccessfully tried to oust Kerry from his Senate seat. During that electoral campaign, Parry asked Weld why he had dismissed Wanda's testimony ten years earlier. Weld told him his aides "felt her credibility was roughly that of a wagonload of diseased blankets". But he declined to be more specific.

That same year deceased journalist Gary Webb published a series of articles in the San Jose Mercury News called "Dark Alliance", in which he documented the contra-drug connection of the 1980's, right down to the dealings between contra fundraiser Danilo Blandón and drug lord Rick Ross, California's "king of crack". Webb's articles infuriated California's African American community, which had gotten the worst part of the crack epidemic. The public uproar motivated the CIA to undertake an internal investigation into the matter, led by the Agency's inspector general, Frederick Hitz (4).

Hitz released his final report on the contra drug allegations in 1998. The mainstream media hailed the report, claiming it cleared the Agency of any wrongdoing. But Hitz, now a scholar at the University of Virginia's Center for National Security Law, said in the report that the war against the Sandinistas had taken precedence over law enforcement, and that the CIA had evidence of contra involvement in cocaine trafficking but kept quiet about it.

In the words of Robert Parry, "CIA Inspector General Frederick Hitz ultimately produced a fairly honest and comprehensive report that not only confirmed many of the longstanding allegations about Contra-cocaine trafficking but revealed that the CIA and the Reagan administration knew much more about the criminal activity than any of us outsiders did." (5)

But the Hitz report did Webb no good. For his journalistic audacity, Webb was savaged by fellow reporters and editors, particularly from the Washington Post, the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times. The Mercury News buckled under the pressure. The newspaper got rid of

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Webb and practically apologized to the CIA. Unemployed, shunned by his own colleagues and very much abandoned by progressive sectors that had lost interest in the story, Webb took his own life on December 10 2004. His journalistic saga and tragic end are the subject of the 2006 book *Kill the Messenger: How the CIA's Crack-cocaine Controversy Destroyed Journalist Gary Webb*, by Nick Schou. The book was made into a Hollywood film released in October 2014 (6).

In the month previous to the film's release, the CIA declassified a number of articles of its internal publication, *Studies in Intelligence*, including one specifically about Webb's journalism. The article, titled "Managing a Nightmare: CIA Public Affairs and the Drug Conspiracy Story", showed that the Agency was really distressed by Webb's contra articles: "By anyone's definition, the emergence of this story posed a genuine public relations crisis for the Agency." (7)

According to the article, which was apparently written at the end of 1996, the CIA took active steps to discredit Webb and his articles, and relied on the press itself to do its dirty work. The Agency's public affairs staff was able to count on "a ground base of already productive relations with journalists". The article even boasts that "one major news affiliate, after speaking with a CIA media spokesman, decided not to run the story."

As the 10th anniversary of Webb's death approaches, looking back on almost 30 years since Iran Contra and the first journalistic investigations into contra drug trafficking, it is worth noting that these revelations owe much to the courageous testimony of one Puerto Rican woman who is now living a regular ordinary life somewhere in this Caribbean island.

- Ruiz-Marrero is a Puerto Rican journalist. His bilingual blog (<http://carmeloruiz.blogspot.com/>) is a collection of news items of progressive interest. His Twitter ID is @carmeloruiz.

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Césaire, Fanon y Chávez: la permanencia del discurso anticolonial y antimperialista

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