
Apuntes en torno a los vínculos interpersonales entre Martí y Maceo

Notes on the interpersonal links between Martí and Maceo

Josefa Azel Jiménez

Universidad Central “Marta Abreu” de Las Villas

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6451-4981>

Correo electrónico(s):

josefaa@uclv.edu.cu

Recibido: 12/12/2022

Aceptado: 04/03/2022

Resumen: El ensayo es un resultado científico de una investigación histórica relacionada con los vínculos interpersonales entre Martí y Maceo. Luego de analizar su desarrollo en diferentes momentos, ya fueran opuestos o afines, se exponen los puntos de convergencia de sus respectivos pensamientos, pues ambos patriotas fueron consecuentes con los más altos principios revolucionarios. Se recurrió a los métodos teóricos: histórico-lógico, histórico-cronológico, abstracción y generalización de lo histórico, inductivo-deductivo, análisis y síntesis; empíricos: revisión de documentos, análisis del discurso. Puede utilizarse como material de profundización en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, en la preparación metodológica y en la docencia de posgrado.

Palabras clave: Martí; Maceo; Gómez; Proyecto de San Pedro Sula; La Fernandina; La Mejorana.

Abstract: The essay is a scientific result of a historical research related to the interpersonal links between Martí and Maceo. After analyzing their development in different moments, either opposing or related, the points of convergence of their respective thoughts are exposed, since both patriots were consistent with the highest revolutionary principles. Theoretical methods were applied: historical-logical, historical-chronological, abstraction and generalization of the historical, inductive-deductive, analysis and synthesis; empirical: revision of documents, discourse analysis. It can be used as material for deepening in the teaching-learning process, in methodological preparation and in postgraduate teaching.

Keywords: Martí; Maceo; Gómez; San Pedro Sula Project; La Fernandina; La Mejorana.

Introduction

A recurring theme in Cuban historiography has been the interpersonal relationship between José Martí and Antonio Maceo, although generally biased and incomplete. This has originated the presence of certain controversies in Cuban History classes that the teacher has the mission of clarifying. Likewise, there has been a frequent practice of exalting only the virtues of the great figures of the independence struggles, distancing them from the objective reality by ignoring that, in the classroom, the student must enjoy the victories and suffer the defeats of his heroes, as Remiro Guerra stated in his work *Primary education in the XX century*.

In contrast, the dismantling of the history present in the enemies of the Cuban Revolution and its historical significance, has tried to distort its legacy, attacking these

and other of its historical personalities with the aim of undermining the ideological foundations on which the revolutionary principles are based by exposing alleged errors or personal defects and, at the same time, minimizing the essence of its true greatness.

The above stated and the relevance given to the History of Cuba at the present time are the reasons that encouraged the author to carry out a historical research about the interpersonal links between José Martí and Antonio Maceo. It is considered, therefore, a topic of study of significant importance for the teaching of this subject.

The research results are synthetically exposed in this essay, which is available to those interested in the teaching-learning process of Cuban History, both in the academic field of universities and as a material for consultation and/or deepening of the discipline. Likewise, it can contribute to the methodological preparation of teachers of the subject at all teaching levels, as well as in postgraduate education. For these reasons, it is stated as an objective: to value the interpersonal links existing between José Martí and Antonio Maceo.

Theoretical methods were applied: historical-logical, inductive-deductive, analysis and synthesis, abstraction and generalization of the historical and historical-chronological, which are fundamental in research of this typology. Likewise, empirical methods were used: document analysis and discourse analysis.

Development

In the period between the Tregua Fecunda and the first months of the Revolution of 1895, a problem appears as the object of conjecture: the relations between two of its main figures, José Martí, the Apostle of the independence of Cuba, and Antonio Maceo, the Bronze Titan. It has been repeatedly stated that these were strained and difficult; hence, the valuation study carried out, which was divided into four stages for a better understanding.

First stage: mutual recognition

Martí arrived at the United States in January 1880, after his deportation to Spain. He immediately joined the Revolutionary Committee of New York; he took part in the preparations for the Chiquita War, and helped Calixto García in important organizational tasks.

Maceo was known to the Apostle for his glorious performance in the Ten Years' War, but

the same was not true on the other side. At the beginning of the eighties of the 19th century, Martí was not yet the renowned Latin American writer and journalist of later years, and as he himself said: "Perhaps, because of my hatred of useless publicity, ignore U. who writes you this letter" (Martí, 1993, p. 236). (Martí, 1993, p. 236) That letter was the first communication between the two, in search of support to resume the struggle, but Maceo did not answer him.

Second Stage: Martí's break with the San Pedro Sula Project

At the end of 1884, a new insurrectional project took off, the Plan of San Pedro Sula, inspired fundamentally by Máximo Gómez and welcomed with great fervor by the Key West emigration. The Generalissimo and Maceo went to New York, where they established relations with Martí, who after some meetings, broke with them.

The writer Carlos Manuel Márquez Sterling, detailed in detail what happened on Saturday, October 18, 1884. Due to its importance, some questions are pointed out:

Martí has been very sympathetic to the Caudillo, but the latter has made the mistake of always having Maceo present in his conversations...With accurate judgment, Martí begins to refer to the trip. The general feels mortified, annoyed... Until now he has been soft with Martí, but he is already going beyond those limits, in which Máximo Gómez has wanted to stop him. However, there is something that mortifies the general even more. The disregard that Martí is making of Maceo who is the head of the mission. Gomez, who can no longer contain himself: "See, Marti, limit yourself to what the instructions say and in the rest General Maceo will do what must be done..."

Maceo is embarrassed; he intervenes a little self-consciously. He tries to make Martí understand that they should consider the war in Cuba as the property of Máximo Gómez, in which no one should intervene and which should be left entirely in his hands... Martí says goodbye in an elegant and polite manner. But Maceo is not fooled. General -he says to Gómez- that man is leaving in disgust with us....

When he arrives home he has taken a very difficult decision. He will break with General Gómez. He allows two days to pass so that this very serious determination, influenced by his pain, is not inspired by obfuscation. A useless tactic, but as soon as he thinks it is ripe, he takes

up his pen to write to "his distinguished general and friend". (Cabrales, 1996, pp. 225-228).

It is necessary to point out that the Master's break with the project meant a break with the inadequate methods of waging war, due to organizational, strategic and tactical problems, never as a consequence of a personal disagreement with Gómez or Maceo, as many have pointed out, among them, Márquez Sterling -although this could have been the trigger for the decision-, something that Martí clearly explained in his letter to Gómez. To think otherwise is to ignore the history, character and intelligence of the most universal of Cubans.

The sources consulted confirm Maceo's intention to placate Martí and rectify the incident, as can be seen in the story. The main cause to separate from the Project was not motivated in any way, in the conversation with Major General Antonio Maceo, although his criteria emitted in the absence of Gómez, contributed to that determination.

Everything seems to indicate that Maceo's predisposition towards Martí arose as a result of the negative influence exerted by third parties, either in conversations or through correspondence, which fueled the disagreements and mistrust with malicious opinions and distorted criteria about Martí. Fragments of two letters will be cited as examples:

Unpublished letter sent by the Bronze Titan, to Juan Arnao y Alfonso, June 14, 1885:

I have the pleasure to acknowledge receipt of your pleasant letter, dated the 10th of the present. Sensitive is by all means the knowledge of the facts that exist today, which try to darken the clean horizon of our preparatory work, sad truth... what does it matter then the duplicity and falsehood of a few, if we count on the abnegation and proven patriotism of the most of them? But, it matters little; without them and against them our work is carried out, without their Machiavellian plans based on infamy and slander being enough to prevent it. I must thank you for the background information on his conduct that you have been kind enough to provide me with, and I must also thank my friend Rubiera for the same service. Knowing as you do the retrograde tendencies of the friend who occupies us, you should seek the consensus of those who, lovers of their homeland, aspire to the good of it, so that united in this way they may fight in all areas against such a fatal element. (Maceo, 1885, p.1)

The missive of Juan Arnao, exposed in the epistolary of Cabrales (pp. 229-231) curiously

appears incomplete; it lacks the fragment where he supposedly should have referred to the matter.

Another example is the letter sent by Dr. José Miguel Párraga, dated June 10, 1885:

...I am sorry to tell you that friend Martí has rendered himself useless with respect to the Colony; his character and his actions have created antipathy among all those who elected him President of the "Asociación Cubana de Socorros" on the night of October 15, 1884 and, as is natural, his resignation -if he does not resign- will be inevitable, I am sorry, but I think it is convenient, because friend Martí does not work, nor does he let work, as his fellow board members say. (Cabralles, 1996, pp. 228-229).

In the author's opinion, such influences played a negative role in Maceo's appreciation of Martí, which is why they had a significant repercussion in the future.

Analyzed the facts up to here, succinctly explained, it can be affirmed that the relations between both patriots turned sour from the moment of Martí's opposition to the insurrectionist plans of Maceo and Gómez, in the years of 1884-1885. But, above all, to the incidence of several of his compatriots in the emigration, who fomented the indifference and the negative image that little by little the Bronze Titan was forming about the Apostle.

Third stage: approach

During the investigative process no documentary evidence of mutual contacts between the two was found until January 4, 1888, when Maceo wrote to him in the following terms:

Today as yesterday I think that we Cubans must all, without social distinctions of any kind, lay down before the altar of the slave homeland and every day more unfortunate, all our dissensions and all those germs of discord that the enemies of our noble cause have been able to sow in our hearts. (Roig, 1950, p.373).

Another historical evidence dates from 1891 with Martí's letter to Maceo dated July 24, acknowledging receipt of his letters of June 25 and July 7, respectively. He bade farewell to the Bronze Titan as follows: "Take care of yourself by doing your business as far away as possible from the politics of those countries and count on your old friend." (Cabralles, 1996, p. 289)

Later there is another one from the Apostle, dated February 1, 1893. In it he offered him a group of war supplies for an eventual expedition to Cuba. The letter ended in these terms: "What an eloquent letter you sent me about the dear old lady! I have read it a lot. Didn't you read Patria about her? Your friend, José Martí". (Cabrales, 1996, pp. 14-15).

From the above documents, it can be inferred that even before July 24, 1891, their ties were reestablished. Mutual tensions were softened through correspondence.

Martí understood the need to attract the efforts of the old revolutionary leadership. He met with Máximo Gómez in Santo Domingo. On September 13, 1892, he informed him of the decision of the revolutionary clubs to assign him the position of General in Chief of the Liberation Army. Gómez recommended him to meet with Maceo and other patriots in Costa Rica to add them to the project.

Martí wrote affectionately to Major General Antonio Maceo from New York on May 25, 1893. He announced his arrival to Puerto Limón between June 15 and 30.

I am anxious to see him. I have already written to you and Flor from New Orleans. I know that you know my soul well, and that you expect nothing but loyalty and affection from it. With equal tenacity I watch over our country, where there is no problem that cannot be solved with honor and justice, - and for the glory of those who have created it with their services. I now have before my eyes "La Protesta de Baraguá" which is one of the most glorious in our history. You will know someday what this friend of yours lives for ... Wait for me with open arms, I already know on my own that the only thing you could be missing is the occasion, which is now renewed to show itself great. (Cabrales, 1996, pp. 15-16)

Martí told Gómez the final results of the encounter as follows:

I, who am in no hurry to censure nor to absolve, have great pleasure in telling you, combining prudence with the natural desire to find good men, that you and I should be pleased with the full and affectionate acceptance by General Maceo of the part of the work that you consider natural to him, and that he welcomed beforehand in the letter he sent to wait for me at Puerto Limón. I treated him with the anguished and deep truth that is in me, and I do not think I am deceiving myself in telling you that he, and what surrounds him, is soon to take his place in the general thinking, and to occupy it with enthusiasm and faith.

(Martí, 1993, p. 393)

The incorporation of Maceo to Martí's project was a victory for the unity of the revolutionary forces. In this way, the start of the combat was guaranteed.

Fourth stage: Further deterioration of relations

Everything seemed to be back to normal, when another incident once again darkened the ties. This occurred when the Fernandina Plan, prepared by Martí with the modest efforts of the Cuban emigration, failed. As part of the project, a boat was planned to pick up Maceo, Flor Crombet, Agustín Cebreco and other patriots in Costa Rica and take them to the eastern coasts of Cuba. The detention of the expedition by the Yankee authorities, product of an indiscretion, left the patriots without ships, without weapons and without money. Thanks to the enormous legal efforts of the Cuban emigrants, they managed to recover a large part of the armaments.

Martí wrote to Maceo on January 19, explaining what had happened. He did it again, aware of the necessity of the presence of the main leaders for the successful development of the war, he offered him to send him \$2,000.00, all he could, so that he could get a sailboat with weapons and travel to Cuba. But the Titan, unaware of the monetary funds of the Cuban Revolutionary Party, replied that he needed \$ 6,000.00 to mobilize his troops.

However, Flor Crombet, from Panama, assured to leave with a smaller amount. The moment did not allow too much delay. As Maceo was indispensable, he ordered Benjamin Guerra, the treasurer of the party, to send the money to Flor, after consulting with Gomez and wrote to the Bronze Titan as delicately as possible to try to convince him. This communication arrived after Maceo had learned of the decision by other means, a circumstance that aggravated his anger even more.

His patriotic duty overcame his state of mind. Thus, the Bronze Titan embarked for Cuba aboard an expedition led by Crombet, who picked him up in Costa Rica. The schooner Honor arrived at the coast of Duaba, on April 1, 1895. Days later, on April 11, Máximo Gómez and José Martí disembarked at Playitas de Cajobabo, along with four other patriots. The meeting of the three great men of the war, which took place on May 5 at the La Mejorana sugar mill, was indispensable.

Maceo had appointed us for Bocuey, where we will not be able to arrive at 12 o'clock, at the time he had scheduled for us... Let's go, -with all our strength. Suddenly, some horsemen. Maceo... came out to look for us, because he has his people on the march... Maceo and G. talk quietly, close to me: they call me briefly, there in the doorway: Maceo has another idea of government: a meeting of the generals in command, by their representatives, -and a General Secretariat- the homeland, then, and all the offices of it, which creates and animates the army, as a secretariat of the army. We go to a room to talk. I cannot disentangle the conversation from Maceo: but are you staying with me or are you going with Gómez? And he speaks to me, cutting off my words, as if I were the continuation of the government of the lawful government, and its representative. I see him hurt - "I love him," he tells me, "less than I loved him" for his reduction to Flor in the commissioning of the expedition, and the expenditure of his money. I insist on deposing myself before the representatives who will meet to elect a government. He does not want each chief of Operations to send his own, born of his own strength: he will send the four from the East: "within 15 days they will be with you - and they will be people that Doctor Martí will not be able to entangle there". - At the table, opulent and rewarding, of hen and suckling pig, I return to the subject: it hurts me, and it disgusts me: I understand that I have to shake off the charge, with which they try to make me dizzy, of citizen defender of the hostile obstacles to the military movement: I maintain, rude: the Army, free, and the country, as a country and with all its dignity represented. I show my dissatisfaction with such an indiscreet and forced conversation, at an open table, in Maceo's haste to depart... (Martí, 1996, pp. 290-294

Apparently, in retribution for what had happened the day before, Maceo invited Martí and Gómez to visit his camp and introduced them to the troops; they were received with great honors. The pages of the Apostle's Campaign Diary, corresponding specifically to that date, mysteriously disappeared without the circumstances of the event being known to this day. However, in a letter to Carmen Miyares dated May 9, 1895, he wrote: "What an enthusiastic review of the 3000 men on foot and on horseback that he had at the gates of Santiago de Cuba!" (Martí, 1993, p.376) This would be the last meeting of the two great men.

As for Maceo's misunderstanding of Martí's conception of republic, the author considers that, in the meeting of La Mejorana, the Titan of Bronze had not yet appreciated that the

difficulties emanated from the authority of the Republic in Arms in the 68th anniversary were not precisely in the fact of having a civil government in the middle of the war, but in the form in which it carried out its mandate and in its enormous structure, in itself inoperative. However, he soon understood his mistake, and on July 14, 1895, he wrote to Bartolomé Masó:

The importance of all the considerations that I made to you and that I have just mentioned to you now will not escape your most enlightened criteria; for although it is true that at the arrival of General Gómez and Martí, I believed that the formation of a government was a premature luxury, it is also true that today I believe it is an imperious necessity. (Souza, 1984, p. 140).

In fact, no other essence to the differences was found during the research. It was pertinent to analyze the convergent points in their respective thoughts and actions, where innumerable and remarkable coincidences were observed. The following are stated below:

1. The need for Cuba's independence, both from Spain and the United States.
2. The autonomist and annexationist danger to the cause of the revolution.
3. The need to maintain friendly relations with the rest of the nations of the world, especially with Latin American nations.
4. The anti-racist approach of the revolution.
5. The need for the formation of a political party to promote and assist the war. Long before the birth of the Cuban Revolutionary Party, precisely in 1886, Maceo had been stating to José A. Rodríguez the idea of an Independent Party for those purposes.
6. The cordial, frank and sincere union of all the sons of Cuba was the ideal of their spirits and the objective of their efforts.
7. They considered that, once total independence had been achieved, the most appropriate form of government, in accordance with the spirit of the times, was republican and democratic.
8. Conception of war as a combined plan.

9. Hatred of Spanish domination, never of the Spanish citizen.

Finally, it should be emphasized that, despite the aforementioned divergences of a merely personal nature, both knew how to put them aside in the face of the supreme responsibilities emanating from the homeland; they were consistent with their principles and subordinated everything to the revolutionary goals to the point of giving their lives in the endeavor. Hence their unquestionable, transcendental and imperishable greatness.

Conclusions

Although between Martí and Maceo, in their interpersonal relations there was an indisputable misunderstanding, influenced fundamentally by third parties who fanned the disagreements and misgivings with malicious opinions and distorted criteria, in the most important sense, in the principles, in their conceptions about the revolutionary strategy, always prevailed an absolute unity and that is the most important thing.

In spite of the disagreements, a supreme objective guided them at all times: the efforts to achieve the independence of Cuba from the Spanish colonial yoke.

Their interpersonal relations never hindered or even tarnished the great project of national liberation headed by them and in which they lost their lives very early, just at the beginning of the Necessary War.

Bibliographic references

- Cabral, G. (1996). Epistolario de héroes. Cartas y otros documentos. La Habana: Ciencias Sociales.
- Maceo, A. (1885) Manuscritos originales de dos cartas inéditas, existentes en la Oficina de Asuntos Históricos del Consejo de Estado.
- Martí, J. (1993). Epistolario. La Habana: Ciencias Sociales.
- Martí, J. (1996). Diario de campaña. Edición crítica. La Habana: Casa Editora Abril.
- Roig de Leuchsenring, E. (1950). Antonio Maceo. Ideología y política. Cartas y otros documentos. La Habana: Editorial Nacional del Centenario de su Nacimiento.

Souza, B. (1986). Máximo Gómez el generalísimo. La Habana: Ciencias Sociales.