

Social Movements in Latin America: 26th of July Movement

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Abstract

The Cuban Revolution and its historical process are at the centre of Latin American studies in social sciences in Türkiye. This article examines the Cuban 26th of July Movement in the context of Latin American social movements. The study is analysed in three parts. First, the structure of Latin America is examined, followed by the history of colonialism and social opposition. In this section, the 26th of July Movement and Cuba are read from the perspective of 'Latin America'. This section is the section in which the social movements literature is examined and the distinction between old and new social movements is examined. The social movement in Cuba is handled around the concept of social movements. The study argues that the Cuban Revolution is an example that transcends the distinction between old and new social movements. Again, in the same section, social movements in Latin America are examined based on the necessity of reading similar examples to understand the Cuban Revolution and the 26th of July Movement. Here, on the other hand, it is underlined that movements in Latin America were influenced by and influenced the Cuban Revolution. The second part of the study deals with the Cuban Revolution and its subject, the 26th of July Movement, in a historical continuity. Here, it is emphasized that it is necessary to examine the 26th of July Movement with a process-oriented perspective, not a leader-oriented perspective. Otherwise, the historical process will be denied, and it will be moved away from being scientific. In the conclusion part of the study, the Cuban Revolution in international relations and the results of this revolution are examined. In the study, the populist, modernizing and anti-imperialist character of the Cuban Revolution is emphasized before its socialist character. As a method in the study, it is based on literature review and document analysis from qualitative research methods.



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Introduction

Latin America has a highly developed history in terms of social mobilization. The history of these social movements can be taken from the indigenous revolts that broke out after the Spanish Colonialism began in the continent in 1492. It is possible to talk about current examples. Perhaps the most important of these social movements, among which the Bolivarian Movement from Venezuela, the *Zapatistas* from Mexico and the Sandinistas of Nicaragua is the 26th of July Movement in Cuba. The major difference of this movement from other social movements in Latin America is that on January 1, 1959, the 26th of July Movement took power in Cuba and still is on the power.

What this study aims to reveal is that the main motivation underlying Fidel Castro, who was the leader of the 26th of July Movement and the leadership of the movement to meet the practical needs before the ideological needs, is related to populism. Populism here defines conflicting elements such as political equality fused with a certain type of authoritarianism under charismatic leadership and the demand for universal participation for ordinary people (Yılmaz, 2020a: 138). Populism is anti-elite and has no class aspect. Populism advocates the supremacy of the people against the rule of law. According to the narrative of populism, the masses are oppressed by the elite and threatened by “others” (Yılmaz, 2020a: 53). Populism is a style of making politics, not an ideology. It can be said that populism is a logic of politics used by ideological agents (Yılmaz, 2021a: 68).

The main claim of the study is that the populism of Castro and the leadership of the movement are hidden under socialist content. This has been touted as such by both capitalist ideologues and leftist thinkers. However, the Cuban Revolution and the leadership have had no effort to hide their populism. And this effort has not also happened so far. In the study, first, Cuba’s pre-revolutionary situation will be examined, then the social movements literature will be examined and finally the 26th of July Movement as a social movement will be discussed. The second title will examine social movements and question whether the 26th of July Movement is a social movement or not. To prove the main claim of the study, how populism and Marxism developed in Cuba will be examined in the third chapter. Another of the main purposes of the study is that the social movement in Cuba cannot be compressed into the old and new distinction. Finally, the thing that will be tried to be proved is to prevent the confusion of concepts about the

Cuban Revolution, especially in Türkiye. It will be argued that the process in Cuba is not a transition to socialism, but a modernization perspective in a peripheral country.

In Cuba, there was widespread opposition to the Batista regime, which ruled the country as a one-man dictatorship in the 1950s. This opposition movement included the Cuban Communist Party, which was supported by the Soviet Union. However, the movement that overthrew Batista was Fidel Castro and his team, which could be positioned as centre-left and created a break in the Orthodox Party¹. While classifying this social movement, it could not be said that it was clearly positioned on the socialist left at its starting point. Both the pre-revolutionary and now of the revolution discourses of the leaders² of the movement supported this inference. All these details should be examined together with the background that created the 26th of July Movement, the conjuncture that created the movement, and the antagonisms created by the movement (Raby, 2017: 116).

In this sense, the limitations of the study are primarily the concept of Latin America, the social stratification caused by the conquest process, the concept of social movements, examples of social movements in the 19th and 20th centuries, and finally, the 26th of July Movement, which is chosen as an example of this study, between 1953-1959 in social movements in Cuba. In the study, other examples of social movements in Latin America are discussed to show examples of social movements before and after the Cuban Revolution and how the Cuban Revolution affected them. In the study, the 26th of July Movement is examined, and it is tried to shed light on other social movements in the region. While this is being done, the modernizing, populist and anti-imperialist features of the Cuban Revolution will serve as an icebreaker for the study. It will be argued that it is useless to read the subjects of the Cuban Revolution or other social movements in the region along two antagonistic lines: “old” and “new” social movements. While doing this, it will be said that some of the legacies left by the colonialism as a top determinant of the history of the region have shared some features of the social movements in the region.

¹ “The Orthodox Party, under the leadership of Eduardo Chibas, believed that the Authentic Party, riddled with corruption, had betrayed the ideals of the Revolution of 1934 when it came to power in an overthrow of the Machado dictatorship. In 1940, Cuba had adopted a progressive constitution that guaranteed labor rights, but after World War II the Authentic Party under Batista’s leadership turned to the right and became corrupt as it welcomed North American mobsters into Cuba’s tourist industry” (Prevost, 2007: 19).

² For instance, Fidel Castro -the grand leader of the movement- in 1959 said that this Revolution “was a green one, thriving first of all on the natural virtues of the Cuban people rather than on material resources or capitalist -or Marxist-inspired visions on modernity” (Gabreëls, 2022: 5).



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1. Social Movements

Social movements refer to the whole of organized actions based on conflicts that are supra-institutional and have a certain continuity. On the theoretical level, the supra-institutionalism of social movements corresponds to organizational forms that frequently resort to disruptive actions such as demonstrations, marches, boycotts, sit-ins, occupation, and organized plunder, bypassing the established channels and bureaucratic regulations of traditional participatory democracy (Gürcan, 2019: 73). Sociologist Gordon Marshall says that social movements can be defined as a concept that shows the organized effort of a significant number of people to change (or resist changing) one or more of the salient features of society. According to Marshall, social movements have specific goals and formal organizations. Although they act outside the regular political channels of society, they can penetrate deep into the circles of political power as interest groups. While the goals of social movements can be narrow-scoped, they can also be as broad as overthrowing the hegemony of the capitalist world system (Marshall, 2009).

Social movements are defined as collective actions against elites, authorities, other groups, or cultural codes, developed by individuals who have common goals and are in solidarity, in permanent interaction with elites, other groups and elements. Social conflicts and demands that emerged in different geographies in history have begun to be expressed as social movements in accordance with the definition given above since the 19th century, when national states were fully formed and consolidated their power. In this context, the second half of the 19th century is accepted as the beginning of the development process of modern social movements. A very important change occurred in the 19th century, from defensive actions traditionally performed by community groups to organized, self-conscious, more permanent movements and actions that seek new rights and opportunities (Demiroğlu, 2014: 134).

According to another sociologist, David Newman, the common emphasis of all social movements is on social change: the desire to enact, stop or reverse something. For Newman, social movements can be divided into old ones and new ones. While the old-style movements followed a political line focused on seizing power, new social movements kept a line of struggle in the cultural context without seizing power (Newman, 2016). The shared characteristics of new social movements can be divided into four general areas: goal orientation, forms, participants, and value (D'anieri et al., 1990: 446). New social movements worked outside formal institutional channels and emphasized lifestyle, ethics, and identity concerns rather than socio-economic goals

(Calhoun, 1993: 385). After examining the old and new versions of social movements in the study, it should be looked at how these movements occurred in the Latin America region.

The classic social movements of the Latin America region had a strong anarchist influence, especially in their initial phase of formation, through European migration, mainly Italian and Spanish, at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th. These anarchist immigrants eventually headed towards rural areas, but mainly towards urban areas, forming the first levies of labour movements, which were artisans and workers in small economic activities. Starting with the First World War and later during the 1920s, the expansion of manufacturing in the region created conditions for the emergence of a more industrial proletariat, which would have its full development with the industrialization processes of the 1930s. The set of social movements that emerged throughout the first decades of the 20th century, with their own cultural base, with their own projects, would have the opportunity to approach power in the 1930s and 1940s with the formation of popular governments and populists. These governments seek to rely on these popular bases and structure this movement in the context of a great national democratic struggle, integrating all these social and cultural forces within a movement of national democratic content that would be in solidarity with the Afro-Asian anti-colonial movements after the Second World War, but which had already incorporated many common points within the anti-imperialist movements of the 1920s until Second World War. The communists managed to place these various movements within the same national democratic logic as the anti-colonialist struggle advanced (Bruckmann and Dos Santos, 2005: 1-6).

Some social movements, such as the EZLN³, belong to the family of new social movements that emerged after the 1980s. These new social movements “represents a radically new form of organisation and politics that highlights the postmodern condition: a radical subjectivity of experience and the self-constitution of a new social subject, a social actor seeking to define and express him/herself on a largely self-constructed stage” (Veltmeyer, 1997: 140). It can be said that the movement in Cuba is closer to the communist movement that occurred in the Second World War. Because it focuses directly on power and raises economic issues. However, in this movement, unlike the traditional communist movements, there is a dominant Cuban identity construction. However, this identity construction does not directly make the said movement a member of the new social movement’s family.

³ *El Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (The Zapatista Army of National Liberation)



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In this context, it can be said that the sole agenda of the old social movements were economic, and their interest was on class antagonism. New social movements, on the other hand, moved away from the economic agenda and drifted into a more identity-related area. But how true and valid is this distinction? Can we classify any movement today according to these distinctions? For example, as we claimed in the study, the 26th of July Movement in Cuba is a populist and anti-imperialist movement and has an identical appearance in terms of both its class-economic agendas and the construction of a common identity against imperialist policies. Where should the movement in Cuba be positioned in this new and old divide? The answers to these questions are answered in the next section.

2. The 26th of July Movement and the Cuban Revolution

To understand the dynamics of the Cuban Revolution, a brief overview of the country's history should be taken first. Cuba acquired its independence in 1898 after the war between the United States (US) and Spain. Cuba was also the last colony to gain independence from Spain. Between 1895 and 1898, Cuba also experienced a process of unsuccessful --many argue that the process was not unsuccessful, but rather that success was impeded by the US intervention (Crahan, 2003: 51)-- independence struggle under the leadership of José Martí. After the independence from the Spanish Kingdom in 1898, Cuba came under the control of the US. By 1902, the US controlled the central bank, customs, police, and the presidency. In addition, a clause was enshrined in the Cuban constitution that gave the United States the right to interfere in Cuba's internal affairs when the interests of its citizens were endangered (Gonzalez, 1994: 6). It is necessary to mention two presidents under the control of the US until the coup against Gerardo Machado by Fulgencio Batista in 1933. The first of these presidents is Tomas Estrada, who served between 1902-1906, and the other is Jose Miguel Gomez, who served between 1909 and 1913. Batista withdrew from the political scene in 1944 to take a role again in 1952, and during this time, he left his job to Ramon Grau San Martin (Navarro, 2015). In the history of Cuba, the unstable administrations of the presidents who came to power after independence legitimized the iron fist of the military-based Batista.

In the 1950s, Cuba's economy depended on sugar exports, whose production and marketing were controlled by foreign companies. Eleven US companies appropriated almost 1,200,000 hectares, which represented 47.4 percent of the land devoted to sugarcane cultivation. The social, economic, and political conditions were disastrous, proper circumstances for an

uprising (PL, 2017). At the beginning of that decade, accusations of corruption increased and, due to the protest mobilizations, a sector of the Army supported by US companies and Cuban businessmen staged a coup on March 10, 1952. The new dictator was Fulgencio Batista (PL, 2017). In this process, it can be said that Cuba was a semi-feudal peripheral country whose economy was based on a single product and dependent on a central country (Yılmaz, 2021b: 57).

Batista, who recaptured the power he had renounced in 1952, imported sugar beet to the US cheaply and built tourism more on gambling. Besides the bad economic situation, the Cuban people, whose national dignity was damaged, reacted to this trend. While the villagers were inactive, effective actions were taken by students and middle-class groups in the cities. Alongside Batista, there were two prominent subjects in Cuban politics: The Orthodox Party and the Cuban Communist Party. However, these parties were dissolved after Batista's coup in 1952. Fidel Castro, who was the leader of the movement, sued this coup in 1952. But this application was rejected. Since the military coup of 1952, universities had become a centre of anti-Batista activities. Numerous strikes and demonstrations had occurred in the student centres. Thus, a closer unity of action and purpose was forged among the revolutionary youth, which would be key to the defeat of the dictatorship (Oliveras, 2014: 3).

Batista's dictatorship only led to increased oppression and violence. In a short time, a resistance started against this dictatorship. Fidel Castro founded an organization called *Movimiento* (The Movement) with his brother Raul Castro. Before the establishment of this movement, Castro was involved in politics within the Orthodox Party for numerous years (Harnecker, 1997). The main axis of this resistance movement was the struggle against injustice and the inequality in the social order. On July 26, 1953, a group of workers and youth, who were part of this movement, led by Fidel Castro, tried to seize the country's second-largest military base, the Moncada Barracks. With this action, a new process began, leading to the downfall of Batista. The Moncada Barracks raid was unsuccessful, but this group of revolutionaries led the people to mass and unite in one goal. The 26th of July Movement took its name from this event (Yılmaz, 2018a).

The 26th of July Movement is an important physical/armed resistance movement that did not remain at the verbal or protest level in Cuban history. The movement first started secretly and illegally. Castro, in his trial after the Moncada Barracks raid, explained the program of the 26th of July Movement as "distributing land to the poor peasants, giving 30% of the profits in the factories to the workers, confiscating the riches that provide unjust enrichment". 26th of July

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Movement was based not just on a peasantry or working class, it was based on a broader foundation (Yaremko, 1993: vii). Mario Mencía Cobas identifies 4 important factors in the birth of the movement:

“1. The existence of a vanguard combatant core, the Moncadistas, endorsed by the lives offered and their willingness to continue fighting; with a realistic program of changes longed for by the people, an intelligent tactic and an accurate strategic vision, and an effective method to attract the masses and channel the revolution, in accordance with the political, social, temperamental, and psychological idiosyncrasies of the Cubans.

2. The growing discredit of the opposition representatives who advocated pseudo-insurrectionary, putschist solutions, without realizing them in practice, on the one hand, and, on the other, those who clamoured for civic, peaceful openings, all the more useless the more arrogant the regime scorned them.

3. The consolidation of the tyranny in power, based on a strong police-military coercive apparatus, and the use of imposing and repressive methods against those who oppose it: a wide range of opposition politicians, from peaceful to insurrectionalists, but more specifically against the explosive student movement, mostly insubordinate, some worker bases in rebellion against the imposed leaderships, dispersed peasant communities deprived of all rights and with little capacity to respond, and even progressive and liberal intellectuals who simply demanded a return to institutionality. .

4. The contradictory situations that occur in the so-called insurrectional sector. On the one hand, organizations that have disappeared, such as Acción Libertadora, or have suffered a state of dissolution, such as the Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario (MNR), or their leaders have begun to discredit themselves, such as Triple A” (Mencía Cobas, 2009).

Inquiring into the ideological and discourse genesis of the 26th of July Movement was relatively complex in the sense that there is not a profusion of bibliography on the matter, not so much about other issues such as the turning point or the construction of socialism in Cuba (Calvo González, 2012: 4). The main hypothesis of this work is that the Cuban revolution was populist but not socialist. It was not until 1961 that Fidel Castro declared himself as a communist. While Castro was not at this point ready to proclaim himself a Marxist, he was one for all intents and purpose. Socialism was not mentioned as a revolutionary goal (Gallo, 1974: 81-82). The Movement was looking for a unit in the rest of the country like the one that worked in practice in the East, where it had the direct support or sympathy of most of the population (Solar-Cabrales, 2014: 38). And it is known today that Ernesto Che Guevara was the only person in that revolutionary group to read Marxist literature (Goodsell, 1969: 789). Another name who was close to socialism was Raul Castro (Tennant, 1998).

Castro was sentenced to 15 years after Moncada. Castro was pardoned by Batista then was released in May 1955 (Preciado, 2017: 186). However, he was later escaped to Mexico in July 1955 (Miroff, 2014). In this process, the massiveness and mobility that the 26th of July Movement initiated in the country could be understood because the Batista regime was believed to have killed 20.000 people. Because of the pressures, the reaction to the Batista regime increased and the sympathy for the 26th of July Movement increased. The Movement initially also developed its tactics around the revolutionary general strike, but after its failure in April 1958 the Movement focused all its efforts and resources on a confrontation against the regular Army, the institution in which Batista cemented his power from his first appearance in Cuban politics (Patricia, 2018: 119).

The armed struggle deepened when Fidel Castro and his revolutionary troops landed in the south of Cuba with their ship Granma, on December 2, 1956. They were received by an army of thousands of men who quickly wreaked havoc in the revolutionary ranks (Editorial, 2023). Slowly gaining strength, the rebel movement assassinated Batista in 1957, and Batista narrowly escaped this assassination (Faria Jr, 2023: 14). In 1958, the Movement waged an all-out war against the Batista regime (Plazas, 2014: 44). Castro's, who entered the country again in 1956, captured the capital Havana on January 1, 1959, after a 25-month struggle -Castro and his troops entered Havana on January 8th. Just before this event, Batista left the country. After Fidel Castro and his friends seized power, Cuba witnessed various changes in the political, social, and economic spheres (Aremu and Soetan, 2017: 64):

“When Castro assumed power in 1959, Cuba ranked among the most developed countries in the region. While available data must be viewed cautiously and assumed to portray merely a rough approximation of conditions at the time, the island ranked eighth and fifth respectively, among Latin America's twenty principal countries in gross domestic product (GDP) and gross domestic product per capita. Even more impressive, only two countries had manufacturing sectors that contributed more to the national product than Cuba's” (Eckstein, 1986: 503).

This reflects the situation in Cuba when Castro came to power, meaning that it was the result of the work of Batista's and previous governments. Fidel Castro did not declare himself a communist until 1961. So, what happened during this period? Answering this question will shed light on the ideological transformation of the Castro- led movement. Fidel Castro went to North America trip in April 1959 (four months later after the Revolution) (McPherson, 2007: 237). He was not a Marxist at that time (Schlesinger Jr, 1986: 612). Before the revolution, Fidel Castro's



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political position was like an outsider (Ambrose-Carson, 1995: 301). The outsiders say that they “come from the outside”, so they are not involved in the existing pollution of the established order. In this context, outsiders are one of the most well-known features of populism (Yılmaz, 2021: 52). Fidel Castro became a Marxist, less for ideological reasons than out of the pragmatic need to consolidate the revolution (Schlesinger Jr, 1986: 613). At that time, the Eisenhower administration in the US tried to block Castro’s assumption of power by finding the proverbial safe pair of hands to protect American interests from the populist rebels (Dunne, 2011: 450).

“The first crude and imperfect expressions of these historical realities were not long in coming. During 1959, as the revolutionary government moved toward urban and agrarian reform, the nationalization of some foreign properties, and the freeing of Cuba from U.S. control, cries of ‘betrayal,’ ‘subversion,’ and ‘communism’ were heard both in Cuba and abroad. Although causality should not be assumed, it is not entirely coincidental that in March 1960, one month after Cuba signed a \$100 million loan and a sugar and trade agreement with the Soviet Union, President Eisenhower directed the CIA to begin organizing, training, and equipping the Cuban exiles who 13 months later came ashore at the Bay of Pigs” (Fagen, 1978: 70).

For 30 years, the Soviet Union has been Cuba’s biggest ally. In addition to the mutual solidarity of the two states, the Soviet Union and Cuba were major support providers for the revolutionary movements in the region. The Soviet Union provided aid such as weapons, money, and education to the revolutionary movements in the region through Cuba. It is said that in the 1980s, 4 billion dollars of economic aid was given to the region annually, 3 billion of which went to Cuba and the rest to other movements (Yılmaz, 2020b). So, if Cuba associated with the Soviet Union for pragmatic reasons, as we mentioned, if it was not a socialist before the revolution, why does it still describe itself as communist today? Why is it still on bad terms with the US after the Soviet Union collapsed?

The most well-known answer to this question is that Fidel Castro traumatized the US (Pérez Jr, 2016). However, this is not scientifically sufficient. After the missile crisis, the US started to impose an embargo on Cuba in 1962. This embargo continues today and is seen as the main reason for Cuba’s isolation (The Conversation, 2021). So much so that the economic crisis caused by these embargoes also caused social explosions in Cuba (Cueto, 2021). There is also literature that blamed this economic situation on the Castro regime’s socialist/communist economic policies (Hawkins, 2001: 441). The Cuban leadership tried to prevent these social explosions by allowing exits from the country (de la Nuez, 1998: 105). Moreover, this date when relations were cut, did not progress straight. Relations between the two countries were established

from time to time. So much so that the embargo was eased, according to the agreement signed in 2015, but this agreement ended in 2017 with the administration of Donald Trump (Lamrani, 2015: 8).

The point I want to reach is that Cuba's insistence on the socialist system is not a one-sided demand. There are sufficient reasons that push Cuba to do this. While one of them is the imposition of the capitalist system, as we will see above, the other can be put forward as the left populist governments in Latin America since the 2000s and the support these governments give to Cuba. Here, with the Bolivarian Revolution, Venezuela's inexpensive oil aid to Cuba on the condition of getting support in fields such as education and health can be recalled (Yılmaz, 2018b). At this point, it can be added that the relations with China are also beneficial for Cuba (Erikson, 2005: 410). It would be useful to examine the relationship of Martí's thought with Marxism.

Martí's thought and Marxist thought converged in the twenties around the university reform movement. Within this brand, Julio Antonio Mella promoted the creation of the José Martí popular universities and, at the same time, was convinced that there was no university reform without revolution (Harnecker, 1988: 2). Martí's thought documented a moral nationalism, and it can be noted that Martí had a great impact on the Cuban Revolution (Santí, 1986: 140-141). Martí approached the problems of society with idealism and optimism. Martí's ideas were incompatible with Marxism-Leninism. The Castro leadership had no choice but to conceal those views: how could one explain how the anti-Marxist Martí—the historical figure—became the pre-Leninist Martí embraced by the Communists after 1959? When the Communists joined the Castro government, the party recast Martí as a herald of Marxism (Ripoll, 1994: 5). It can be said that Martí's thoughts are based on modernizing Cuba (Yılmaz, 2021b: 51). Its core ideals are rationality and order - these two words are the hallmarks of modernity (Yılmaz, 2021b: 54).

Therefore, we can ask this question: Why Fidel Castro did not join the Communist Party before the revolution? The answer is simple: Before the revolution, Castro was not a communist. Viewed from today, his pre-revolutionary ideas can be called populist. Cuba is a link in this chain of social movements.

“In this regard, we can see the Cuban Revolution, at this point, as a populist one. It promoted revolutionary and retaliatory justice against those who'd exploited the common people. Jose Martí's quest to strip away privilege and corruption that oppressed the people seemed within reach. Subsequently, an agrarian reform law



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promulgated in May 1959 restricted the size of island estates, leading to a dramatic redistribution of land to small farmers” (Hartnett, 2022).

It is said that Cuba entered a transformation process, especially after the death of Fidel Castro. It can be said that this transformation has been subjected to criticism, especially by left-wing thinkers, as a break with socialism. Especially after Raul Castro’s retirement, Miguel Díaz-Canel’s coming to power intensified these criticisms (Biegon, 2021: 147). The discourse of advancing the reforms that came with the new constitution also strengthened these criticisms (Oxford Analytica, 2018). However, as this study reveals, any decision made by the Cuban Revolution should not be judged when it is pragmatic, like Fidel Castro’s approach to the Soviet Union. In conclusion, it can be said that the Cuban Revolution was conducted in a peripheral country with a modernization perspective (Yılmaz, 2021b: 56). The subject of this modernization process is the 26th of July Movement.

Conclusion

After the Cuban Revolution, Castro visited US and declared that they (he meant the 26th of July Movement) were not communists. However, when asked if they would like financial help, he replied he went there to establish good relations. After these statements, which were made after the revolution, it is possible to infer that the Cuban Revolution had a national independence character that wanted to establish equal relations with other countries. However, when the interests of US companies were adversely affected after Cuba’s land reform, a conjuncture emerged that the US, the sole buyer of sugarcane, which was Cuba’s sole source of income, did not buy this product. This situation led to a rapprochement with Soviet Union, albeit based on economy. Over time, this convergence turned into an ideological convergence since the movement in Cuba was structurally on the left. The 26th of July Movement left its place in the Cuban Communist Party during the rolling process.

As a result, for the Cuban Revolution, a remarkable number of people made their organized efforts to change one or more of the salient features of society and have specific goals, formal organizations, continuity. At the end of the process, it falls into the category of old social movements to seize power. It has an anti-imperialist and national independence character, being against the US. It can be said that in the participation context of the people in the power process, it has a populist character and the subject who takes power has an egalitarian line in staying in power.

The leaders of the revolutionary movement in Cuba -especially Fidel Castro- were influenced by Martí's popular discourse and organized around this idea. Therefore, it cannot be said that Fidel Castro's statements and decisions in the early 1960s created a dilemma for him. Because Castro was not a communist, as he had declared before, and to protect his popular revolution, he made the decision required by the conjuncture of that time: to approach the Soviet Union. Although Castro wanted to restart his relations with the US before this decision, the damage to the interests of the US in Cuba prevented the restoration of these relations.

What this study aims to reveal is that the main motivation underlying Castro and the leadership of the movement to meet the practical needs before the ideological needs is related to populism. Castro and the movement's populism were hidden under the socialist content it later took on. This has been touted as such by both capitalist ideologues and leftist thinkers. However, the Cuban Revolution and the leadership have no effort to hide their populism. It has not happened so far. In addition to these, the 26th of July Movement in Cuba does not fit into the distinction between old and new social movements. The fact that the studied movement offers both class and identity contents show that some examples in the social movements literature can be categorized as neither old nor new movements. The 26th of July Movement is one of these movements. The 26th of July Movement is one of the most important events in Cuban history. So much so that its influence continues today. Today, Cubans celebrate this date as a national holiday. The Cuban Revolution is an important turning point in the modernization process. The modernization was released to the public in this period. Salaries were increased, renters were reduced, public services were expanded throughout the country, agricultural and educational reforms were made, the distinction between urban and rural areas was trying to be reduced, and a social security system was established (Yılmaz, 2021b: 63).

Finally, it can be said that the 26th of July Movement has the characteristics of populism and anti-imperialism, in line with the tradition of social movements in Latin America. With these aspects, the Cuban Revolution is the executor of modernity. This is not to belittle the Cuban Revolution, but to define its position. The heritage of the region influenced just as the social movement in Cuba, the revolution in Cuba also influenced, spawned, and supported other social movements in the region (Marín Roig and Vélez Jiménez, 2012: 39). Perhaps that is why, thanks to the popular notions it provides, the Cuban Revolution is presented as the only alternative to neoliberal capitalism after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Di Piramo, 2009: 190).

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