

Astronomer's occupation

Via [La Joven Cuba](#)

Leonardo Romero Negrín, a physics student at the University of Havana, was arrested during the April 30 demonstrations in Obispo for carrying a sign saying "Socialism yes, repression no." In the events of July 11, he was arrested again for being a bystander who asked the police why they were brutally repressing his friend and student Marcos Antonio Pérez Fernández, a minor. He is currently in prison and little is known about his situation.

Leo may have his ribs broken, but not the revolution. Leo may be beaten with a stick on his legs, but he will be no less a pacifist, nor will he stop thinking about a country where we all work in an orchard and the elderly do not live alone and children are not let down. Leo may be put in the darkest dungeon, in the darkest cell, but he will not stop being "the physicist," "the magical Leo of the children," the master Leo who makes tea bags levitate.

Today in prison, after being mistreated by an officer, after not being able to see or hear from him, I saw a teenager in a tower guarding the prison yard. I shouted to him from outside that if he saw Leonardo Romero Negrín, the physicist, to tell him that his mother and I were there and that he would get out.

I thought about the stories Leo told me about how important it was in his life to spend his military service in a prison. About how much he learned in those endless guards fishing horses with carrots and thinking "in the night looking into the night," being the most conscious part of the twilight, thinking about a better country.

In military service Leo was free, he confessed this to me a thousand times. Free to think of everything in the moments

when we humans are most creative, those moments when the boredom of not planning or deciding drags us down. He always said that this fast-paced society, populated by interactions and technology, does not allow us to look at the stars and that it was only in this way that humans discovered the mysteries of their existence.

As an astronomer, inveterate reader and analog, Leo's head has given rise to the most enlightening thoughts about politics that I have ever heard in my life. Last night I discovered three books in his bed: one on Martí and the founding of the Cuban Revolutionary Party, one about Marxist philosophy, and one about Fidel's "Words for Intellectuals" speech.

Last night I heard from someone who saw him in prison that his spirit has not been broken and that inside he insists on a socialist country. "Surely he has already created a Marxist school in prison," I commented to the person who told me about him, and the response was, "How do you know that?"

Leo has not stopped being a communist. Many wonder how a young man, after having suffered so much violence, continues to believe that socialism is the way forward for Cuba, persists in defending a project "with everyone and for the good of all." I don't even question this, I understand that now more than ever Leo understands the need for a true revolution. History has just proved Leonardo Romero Negrín right.

Few understood the banner he carried on that sad April 30 in Obispo. "Socialism yes, repression no," were the words written by those who deprived him of his freedom the first time. Leo told the protesters that day that socialism is the way forward for Cuba, that foreign interference and capitalism are the cancer that threatens to annihilate a people, that the blockade is real and is a violation, but that the government should review its political actions because repression for ideological reasons, whether police or symbolic, is not the way out.

Leo placed himself in the middle of both sides so that this battle of hate would be fought on his own territory and not harm his brothers and sisters any further. Leo warned this government as it continued to bet on the socialist state and they made him pay, and they did not listen.

Today, his slogan is a mirror into which Cuba must look to bind up the wounds of hatred. Cuba must also heal the wounds of the territory that was invaded on April 30, a territory that has been imprisoned again. A young body suffering for a country rotting in a prison and we left for work this morning, not thinking that with each passing minute we are also besieged by hatred and pressure from choosing sides.

I will continue to fight to embrace Leonardo Romero Negrín, all his friends will do so, all the beings his soul has touched. I know he knows this and smiles. Leo is not suffering. His mother is well and his homeland will be too.