



Culture e Studi del Sociale

CuSSoc

ISSN: 2531-3975

Camilo Torres Restrepo: Political struggle, Sociology and Praxis

LUCIA PICARELLA

Come citare / How to cite

PICARELLA, L. (2019). Camilo Torres Restrepo: Political struggle, Sociology and Praxis. *Culture e Studi del Sociale*, 4(1), 63-76.

Disponibile / Retrieved <http://www.cussoc.it/index.php/journal/issue/archive>

1. Affiliazione Autore / Authors' information

Universidad Católica de Colombia, Colombia

2. Contatti / Authors' contact

Lucia Picarella: [lpicarella\[at\]ucatolica.edu.co](mailto:lpicarella@ucatolica.edu.co)

Articolo pubblicato online / Article first published online: June 2019



- Peer Reviewed Journal

INDEXED IN
DOAJ

Informazioni aggiuntive / Additional information

[Culture e Studi del Sociale](#)

*Camilo Torres Restrepo: Political struggle, Sociology and Praxis**

Lucia Picarella

Universidad Católica de Colombia, Colombia
E-mail: lpicarella[at]ucatolica.edu.co

Abstract

The aim of the present article is the study of the thought of Camilo Torres Restrepo through the consideration of the variables that have contributed to their development, in order to emphasize the extraordinary inheritance and validity of the *camilismo*. Following this line, we will proceed through the analysis of specific texts that will allow us to understand his reflection in religious, political, and social terms, in a combination that becomes praxis and that takes concrete form in the strong criticism of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and left-wing forces, in his pioneering role in Liberation Theology and forerunner of the social problems that have characterized the Colombian context, in the importance of education and the founding of the first Sociology Faculty in Latin America, in the continuous appeal to politics unity and the entry into the rows of the guerilla.

Keywords: Camilo Torres Restrepo, Colombia, Sociology, Political struggle.

Introduction

In the current phase of uncertainty, the reference to the thought of Camilo Torres Restrepo is significantly relevant. In fact, his reflection is pertinent both in consideration of the events that are going through the world chessboard and, more specifically, in reference to the situation that is characterizing the Colombian context, oscillating between the difficulties of the post-conflict and the demands of the students. It is in fact a phase in which the visions of building conceptual and practical scenarios aimed at building inclusive cultural imagery based on recognition and respect for differences - as well as on common objectives capable of pushing towards processes in which expressions of popular and citizen empowerment are born organized around platforms of protest - collide with dangerous regressive/authoritarian tendencies based on strongly non-inclusive positions.

Undoubtedly, the importance of empowering the capacities and possibilities of popular participation and the construction of social power realities where the popular sectors are the protagonists of the processes of change and renewal of democracy to become a social-political-institutional alternative is one of the central ideas of *camilista* thought. A dream of empowerment that evidently intertwines with the other key point of Torres' reflection, regarding the importance of an autonomous university, fundamental for the development of education, but also to promote dis-

* This article is the result of a research project developed with the Aldo Moro Group of the International Masters in Political Science of the Catholic University of Colombia in agreement with the Università degli Studi di Salerno.

sent¹, necessary for a constructive dialogue. A university that, in Torres' vision, must commit to social problems, and that, therefore, pushes Camilo to reflect on the structuring of a 'Latin American sociology'.

What has just been mentioned, undoubtedly, allows us to understand the importance assumed by the figure of Torres in particular in the Colombian scenario, an importance that can't be conceived without resorting to his historical and personal context. A man of violent contrasts, whose figure oscillates between the wrath of the reactionary press that defines the *ex-cura bandolero* a simple section of the history of Colombia, and the enthusiasm of those who identify the figure of Torres in the symbol, in the cause of Latin America².

A figure contextualized by his status as a priest, sociologist, revolutionary leader, but also by the enthusiasm and, at the same time, by the indignation provoked by this faith that descends from the privileges and immobility of the religious caste and that becomes a historical and social compromise. In fact, it becomes a political practice deeply rooted in a purity of ideals that opens up to the disposition of armed struggle as a form of "against violence" as opposed to institutional violence. Most likely, the interpretation of *camilismo* is not found in programmatic socio-political projects, but in the humanization of social and political relations that is, in the application of human love to all aspects of social life. If in Einstein it is the most powerful force of nature, in Torres it becomes "effective love", thus acquiring a revolutionary and deeply humanist connotation evidently deriving from his condition of being a child of his time. A time that, at the international level, sees the horrors of the Second World War, the post-war crisis and the beginning of the Cold War, while at the regional Latin American level the struggles of liberation and decolonization, of the revolutionary wave of Latin America awakened by the Cuban revolution. And, finally, at the national level, it was characterized by the presence of a strongly split, which was difficult to recompose itself from the internal partisan wars and from the constitutional changes, characterized by democratic squeezes and murders, displacements and violence. A period of hard social conflict and contradictory adjustments required for the development of a political model based on the urgencies of an emerging capitalism, in which the sociological researches of Camilo Torres will be precursors of the dreadful course that will take the Colombian socio-political system.

1. Towards the development of *camilismo*: from theory to praxis

The understanding of *camilismo*, and, in particular, of its strong charismatic charge, rooted in the consideration of a fundamental prerequisite, relative to the placement of the pillars of it as indisputable precursors of what will be recognized

¹ Camilo Torres differentiates between utopian anticonformity (of a sentimental nature, characterized by the need to change, but not knowing the deep and structural causes that generate that status quo) of anticonformity of frustration (more realistic because it is rooted in the real conditions of personal life, but in any case is characterized by of an emotional nature) and, finally, of scientific anti-conformity (it must be structured from the University, to guide the youthful dissatisfaction around a proposed of society transformation founded on socio-economic-political knowledge produced by social research. To deepen, among others, Broderich (1977) and Umaña Luna (1996).

² In this sense, the significance of the figure of Camilo on the part of Aníbal Pinedo, according to which he was "a victim of his reason, a victim of Latin America, dreamed of the land distributed, full of flowers and smiling children. It was a victim of agrarian reform, the capital problem of our convulsed continent" (Guzmán Campos, 1975, pp. 302-308).

as theology of liberation. In Torres the question of liberation is more practical than theoretical because his reflection is not enthroned in the theoretical aspects of the participation of faith in social change but in the priest's commitment to the service of the poor. In fact, Camilo's appreciation as a reference for the development of liberation theology is evident in the presence, in *camilismo*, of the "flags" of the same theology³.

Principles that through his action appear as a way of life and that will be taken up by the theology of liberation. However, assuming the need to avoid terminological confusion in liberation theology and liberation philosophy⁴, obviously if as a social thinker and political leader Camilo is a pioneer of liberation theology, undoubtedly at the basis of his thought and his form of conceptualizing Latin American identity and necessity, the philosophy of freedom is placed. This makes it possible to explain the complexity of his action both on the social level and, later, in consideration of his connection to the insurgent movement.

This prerequisite allows us to delve into the nucleus of the question, in order to understand how religious and political conceptions merge in its academic, social, ministerial and human action. In this perspective, it may be useful to differentiate between certain essential stages of the life and corresponding academic production of the restless student, the son of a bourgeois family soon transformed into an icon⁵. This differentiation will allow us to verify the materialization of effective love in socio-political practice. In order not to lose cohesion, let us structurally simplify this section in some points, in which we will concentrate the analysis considering some specific studies of Camilo Torres, that, in our opinion, show not only the concretion of theoretical thought in practice but also the extraordinary actuality of his reflection.

I. This temporary distribution undoubtedly finds its starting point in the years of his youth training (approximately in the decade 1947-1958). These years correspond to theological and philosophical reflection, to studies of law in the national university of Colombia and to the ecclesiastical decision, to the conformation of the pillar of his thought, that is, the conception of a religion committed to the service of the social level: a conception, oriented despite its traditional religious alignment, by the precepts of social Christianity⁶. The restless search for answers encourages Torres to continue to deepen his scientific preparation with a degree in Sociology at the School of Social and Political Sciences of the University of Leuven, which allows him to focus his understanding of the world and the nature of conflicts in the logic of sociological studies. During those years the characterization of the personality of Camilo Torres takes shape. In fact, the theoretical reflections are declined in their relationship with the proletarian experiences of the Belgian miners, with the rural and urban social realities, with the distance from the "institutional" forms of Christianity supplanted by the approach to the renewing

³ That is, the constant presence in his analysis of social reality, the effective commitment beyond the pulpit, the exchange and work with the community.

⁴ Both tendencies of Latin American origin, were gestated with enough force within the social, political and religious movements of these latitudes. To deepen, see Pérez Prieto (2016), Cerutti Guldberg (1983), and Lois (1988).

⁵ There is a lot of literature about the life of Camilo Torres; among this, this chapter has been structured on the basis of the studies of see: Broderick (1996), Cubides (2010), Álvarez & Restrepo (1966), Giraldo (2015), Guzmán Campos (1975), Lartegury (1967), and Torres, Fals-Borda, Arias (2010).

⁶ In this sense, it should be noted that, during these years, Torres has come into contact with the supporters of this orientation, the Dominicans Blanchet and Nielly. To deepen, see Barrado Barquilla-Rodríguez (1997).

Catholic currents. Through this innovative orientation he matures his legacy of the social dimension of charity and solidarity.

These reflections, pour out in the article “El Cristianismo es un humanismo integral” (Christianity is an integral humanism)⁷. It is nourished by the depth of Maritain’s thought on the consideration of the person as the foundation of society, of his ‘heroic’⁸ humanism but at the same time, indicates the fractures that begin to present themselves in his reflection as a result of his approach to the social sciences. In fact, the idea of a scientific humanism that is strengthened in social practices and in its growing concern about the need for a Church that must approach the analysis of social problems through the formation of priests in the social sciences is beginning to be traced.

In this sense, Christianity should seek a solution to the most latent problems of its time, because the society on which Camilo develops his activity suffers from polarization and partisan violence, elements that are perpetuated rooted in society, condemning it not only to poverty, but to its fate.

In this research process, based on the vision of the person as an example of service to others and of social action as a generator of social and political changes, he approaches a dialectical conception that is not antagonistic between Christianity, Marxism and science. In this perspective, his connection with and in society, allows him to develop a diagnosis in which he distinguishes how Christianity has lost one of the most important elements of the above polarization, namely the proletariat⁹. This observation breaks the paradigm of separation and distance between the Christian and Marxist forms of analyzing historical and social dynamics.

In particular, according to Torres, Christianity must contribute to the change of social structures, the true Christian charism is revolution. The Christian who does not encourage or who does not participate through his action in the change of social structures is not a true Christian, because he does not exercise love for others starting from action and service¹⁰.

Therefore, it is not possible to conceive of faith without the active participation of the militant, not in consideration of a fundamentalism, but in consideration of the emancipatory activity and the change - in any case revolutionary - that comes from the combination of these elements. In fact, the Christian role does not find a barrier in the Marxist schools, but on the contrary a dialectical way of acting, a real way of participating in the social changes necessary for people.

⁷ The Journal “Cathedra” published this article in its October-December 1956 issue. The document has been re-compiled in Torres Restrepo (1985).

⁸ “Humanism tends to make man more truly human and to manifest his original greatness by making him participate in everything that can enrich him in nature and in history; it requires that man develop the contained virtuosities, his creative forces and the life of reason, and work to convert the forces of the physical world into instruments of his freedom. A humanism detached and self-aware, that leads man to sacrifice and superhuman greatness; because human pain opens the eyes and is supported with love; not in renouncing joy, but in a greater thirst and overflowing of joy. A heroic humanism is possible” (Maritain, 2001, Introduction).

⁹ “If we understand as a proletariat the social class that has a different and very homogeneous culture, social class whose activities and concerns are developed in a completely new environment and in which there has not been a presence of Christianity as such, then we could affirm that the proletariat never has been specifically Christian” (Torres Restrepo, 1985, p. 36).

¹⁰ “All service is by itself social, because it supposes, at least, two individuals. In this sense, ethical education has had to be social and, therefore - even if it is not for this reason -, scientific training must always be social, because there can be no moral formation without speculative education. In addition, the scientific teaching of universities has been oriented, over the years, in accordance with the needs and concerns of each era. This is the only way to create leaders who respond to the historical vocation that they have to perform in each era” (Torres Restrepo, 1985, p. 38).

In this first step, in fact, is fixed a cardinal point of the *camilista* conception of 'effective love', which must be accompanied by 'effective charity', constituted by the social and political commitment of the Church with the cause of the humble. In addition, the study of the problems of the communities and their conflicts, approaches Camilo to a pluralist view of the world. Undoubtedly the interconnection between these studies and his relation with these communities will be the springboard from which the possible alliance between Christians and Marxists will be highlighted - as will be best noted in the following work - in order to proceed with the structural changes that benefit the common interest.

II. The stage between the end of the 50s and the beginning of the 60s, is characterized by a deep immersion in social dynamics and conflicts.

As always, this immersion is based on theory and practice, on the study of these dynamics and on the connection with the marginalized and poor realities of the peasant world. It is a phase that sees Camilo occupied on several fronts. In the perspective of social compromise he is chaplain of the National University, mixed with the neighborhood and student communities with the University Movement for the Promotion of Community (Muniproc). He is also co-founder of the Department of Sociology, dean of the School of Public Administration (ESAP), member of the board of directors of the Colombian Institute of Agrarian Reform (Incora), founder of the Rural Action Unit of Casanare, founder of the Colombian socio-economic research team (ECISE) with committees in Western European countries. In the speculative field, his degree thesis in Leuven on the proletarianization of Bogotá introduces the combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis with a surprising documentary collection, constituting a reference as it is the first modern study of urban sociology. In addition to this work, there is also a specialization in Urban Sociology and Work at the University of Minnesota; finally, in relation to the practical implementation of the previous points, there is a break with the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the link with the environment of the third world and with Algerian resistance, the second through his friend Guitemie Olivieri, who influenced his choice for the revolution.

The brief illustration that has just been traced clearly represents the basis for continuing to compose the pieces of the complex characterization of *camilismo*, prompting us to focus attention on some crucial questions that, incontestably, will explain his future choice. In this sense first of all there is the consolidation of the estrangement and opposition to traditional ecclesiastical practices, subordinate to the status quo. In this perspective they are accomplices, secondly, of a devastating period of anti-communist violence, directed essentially at supporting a model of economic development of dependent capitalism, which will profoundly compromise the socio-political and economic map of the nation.

This position occurs simultaneously, both with reference to his reflections on the Colombian context, grouped in the work "Violencia y los cambios socioculturales en las áreas rurales colombianas" (Violence and Sociocultural Changes in Colombian Rural Areas)¹¹ in which Torres not only diagnoses reality, but he is fully involved and participates in the solution, as much as in his ideas on the limits of economic planning for underdeveloped countries, presented in "Programmation

¹¹ The work was presented in 1963 during the first National Congress of Sociology, and published by *Revista la Gaceta*, Año III, N 16 – 17 SEPT.-OCT.-NOV.-DIC. 1966. For depeen, see Torres Restrepo (1982).

économique et exigences apostoliques” (Economic Programming and Apostolic Demands)¹².

In reference to the first work, his solid theoretical-philosophical formation is deployed, and, from the contribution of Germán Guzmán (1962) in the work “La Violencia en Colombia y la constelación de la comunidad campesina” (Violence in Colombia and the constellation of the farmer community), he synthesizes the need to recognize that violence determines as a change. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify Torres' handling of the term violence, based on different philosophical positions, marked by the antagonism that the term implies - either by the disqualification of terror, as a silent and apolitical exercise observed in Hannah Arendt - and the apology that is made of the revolutionary violence on the part of Jean Paul Sartre and Franz Fanón. Camilo perfectly manages this duality, and presents it - through the formulation of a complementary circularity between inductive and deductive methods -, in this work of ‘positive sociology’¹³.

Camilo contextualizes that violence, his country is born from a situation in which violence acts as a detonator of social and political evolution.

From expressions of violence, start the reissue of structures, in the colony, in independence, in the republic and in contemporary history. Consequently, he understands it as a phenomenon generated in the concurrence of two factors, the first one, has to do with the limitation or closure of the peaceful ways for economic, social and cultural development and activity, while the second has to do with the discovery of a group that chooses to overcome these limitations through violent actions¹⁴.

It should be borne in mind that at the time this work was carried out Colombia had not yet known the social phenomena that in the following decades were part of its history. Anyway at the time of projecting this study on violence, the emergence of groups armed “revolutionaries” is incipient, they are barely constituting themselves as an alternative, what if we must rescue, is the forcefulness of the diagnosis made by the author.

Surely the importance of the contribution of Camilo Torres, lies largely in the fact that he visualized through his conceptions the forthcoming consequences of the armed movement, as well as diagnosed the phenomenon of violence. The variables of this diagnosis, however, are not exclusive to Colombian society, but conform to any model of rural society¹⁵. This contextualization allows us to deepen his

¹² The paper was presented in French at the II International Congress of *Pro Mundi Vita* (Leuven, 8-10 September 1964). The translated text was published in Torres Restrepo (1965).

¹³ The expression is used by Torres in the introduction of the same paper.

¹⁴ In an interview for a liberal weekly, “Politics and something else”, Camilo makes the distinction. See Martínez Morales (2011, p. 147).

¹⁵ Synthesizing, Torres starts from the premise of the individual analysis of its variables, among which, for example, they are identified the lack of division of work, specialization, lack of roles; the consideration of social mobility also from a socio-cultural point of view, isolation, considering them as common variables to all rural society, but, from here, evaluating them in the contexts of the rural societies of underdeveloped countries and, finally, more specifically declining them in Colombian rural society. According to Torres, all these characterizations are important because they generate social relationships: in communities affected by violence, social relations and social interactions begin to be based more on the functions of persons, that is to say, are a depersonalization, which, on the one hand, pushes towards the urbanization of rural societies, and on the other hand, in societies affected by violence, urban attitudes will be presented without the instruments of urban society. See Torres Restrepo (1982).

reflection, because although it is clear the disapproval of violence in Torres, however, not justify it does not imply recognizing violence as a factor of social change: changes caused by violence have a sociological importance, within the limits of empirical science. In this sense, violence has not only generated class consciousness, but has also given rise to abnormal instruments of social ascent. The violence, in addition to the variables of its existence, introduced an awareness of the frustration, sharpened it, and implanted the abnormal instruments to resolve the frustration. That through latent aggressiveness, typical of rural communities, and currently own urban communities.

The positive eclecticism has also characterized the second work of Torres related to these years, but, also in this case, for the study of the limiting conditions of the underdeveloped countries and the consideration of possibilities of exit from this condition, we must consider a theoretical prerequisite as basis of the same analysis.

For Camilo, the factor that really conditions and controls the other levels is the economic one. It is enough to carry out an in-depth analysis of the reality (not only of Colombia), to understand that the economic element is not only locked and closed, but is also interested in maintaining the status quo because it benefits from the way as the other elements obstruct the social ascent. That is, simply provokes inequalities and benefits from them. It is also clear, in the *camilista* thought, that the ascending social mobility is not guided by a majority, but by a minority that through conformism, guarantees its interests. In this sense, it is evident that the obstruction of the elements of social ascent by these socio-political-economic elites, generates other factors of violence.

If social promotion factors are not opened, if the empowerment of the roles within society with elements of normal social advancement is not possible, violence will be present in all spheres of society. The possibility of a social claim will be a mere idealistic conception, as well as, if structural changes of the society and the state are not implemented, any intention of change or intention of peace will be doomed to failure. Based on this premise, Camilo presents in this work his approach to the world order, highlighting clearly the alarm - in which resides the main cause of limitation of planning for the 'indigent' countries- relative to the possibilities of a development dependent and politically subordinated to the imperialist power of the developed capitalist countries. More particularly, Torres underlines that the main obstacle is the absence of an authentic economic planning in favor of majorities. Arranged around these majorities there are at least three other types of problems, identified in the absence of productive investments, of qualified technical personnel and of development policies. Therefore, the determining factor these limitations can be summed up in the concentration of power and its essence lies in maintaining the status quo. Against this elitist concentration, in order to improve general economic development, it would be necessary to develop a mentality capable of promoting boldness and creativity, elements that, in turn, clash with the feudal culture of the elites of underdeveloped countries.

What is the exit? Camilo considers the possibility of political pressure, some struggles that can legally relate to the institutionality, but also press illegally¹⁶ the formulation of public policies. In addition, this possibility, must be differentiated

¹⁶ "It's clear that political pressure can't be isolated of economic pressure, much less social pressure. With everything, political pressure is considered here in the sense of the series of management, legal or illegal, peaceful or violent that are carried out in order to seek government decisions. Government decisions can be within the structures, reforming the structures or changing them. Consequently the pressure can be to make, or to obtain accidental changes, or to reform the structures or to change them. This distinction is fundamental for the underdeveloped countries" (Torres Restrepo, 1965).

between a form of pressure for reformist changes - only seeks a compromise solutions -, and a form of pressure to obtain revolutionary changes - prepare society for a structural changes (for example, according to Torres, it could be an agricultural reform in order to industrialize a country). The conclusions therefore crystallize the camilist thought on the importance of popular pressure for a revolutionary change. However, due to the lack of foresight on the part of the elites, violent action may be an alternative. The words of Camilo, again, prophesy those that will be verified after his death, with the materialization of vicious circles that have conditioned the economic development of the countries to the subordination of foreign investment.

III The radicalization of the *camilista* commitment with the social and political levels characterizes the first half of the 60s. At this stage the definitive aggravation and separation of the ecclesiastical hierarchies stands out. In addition there are the strong link with the farmer, trade union, popular and left organizations: all this leads to in a sense of practical action, in the elaboration of the platform for a popular unity movement, whose result will be the realization of the platform of the Frente Unido (United Front), and, from here, in the itinerary that Camilo led of the social and political struggle to the armed struggle in the ranks of the ELN (National Liberation Army). This itinerary, corresponding to the last years of his life, represents incontestably the evolution of Camilo's social thinking towards political commitment. In this compromise the multiple facets of his personality become a political task that, in some way, was nuanced by all the aspects of his life.

Properly what has just been mentioned constitutes the *camilismo*, understood as a social and political practice inherited from his ideas. This legacy is evidently rooted in the understanding of the transformation of his humanist thinking from 'Christianity ideal' towards a practice of 'effective love'. This practice will lead him to an ever stronger compromise with the popular sectors and with the need for structural changes in the country. In fact, the priest who considered service to the neighbor as a form of materialization of 'effective love', reflected this thought in political positions, that in turn were attacked from the established structures, not only from their ecclesiastical hierarchy, but from all the marasmus of the institutionality.

Moreover, assuming that Camilo's actions were a consequence of his thinking, we mean that he challenges the system through defined political positions, starting from the political means at his disposal, transcending from discourse to action.

At the political level, Camilo is a man who demands human and social transformations, that faces the dilemma of the action through the dream, the longing of the vindication of the popular classes in the defined political action. He doesn't contradict himself in his positions, but he seeks a consensus to transform the political reality of the least favored, so he calls for a revolution: a revolution that can promote a transformation starting from the political proposal.

It is advisable to highlight that when Torres promotes the formation of the Frente Unido, he is experiencing a personal moment of crisis: institutionality has closed the doors, church hierarchies have sought to silence him in face of the reality of the country, and the state it has made him a subject to be monitored. Added to this closure is the despair over the state of affairs of the nation: the oppressed people, has opened channels of communication with the guerrilla fronts of the nascent ELN, and of course, has already established the necessary contacts for the binding. The approach of the United Front platform undoubtedly opens up a broad reflection on the messages that Camilo addresses to society, and, equally, it can continue to give way to an extensive study of the political conditions to generate an inter-party union. In fact, again his ideas become in force, in particular with refer-

ence to the situation that currently lives the Colombian left, and in this sense, the revival of the camilist ideas of unity against personalism, can continue to be considered as a necessary task to block the new challenges. These ideas of unity also represent the basis for starting this approach in conjunction, of course, a critical review on the left parties and his reflection on the capacity of the popular classes to deceive. Recomposing theoretical puzzle, one of Torres' main concerns is the need for unity between the revolutionary and popular sectors¹⁷, that must be based on specific purposes through which political actions are specified, so that in this way philosophical speculations become a transforming praxis.

In this sense, camilist pragmatism is expressed in its consideration of practice as a criterion of unity, for the purposes of which it is necessary to overcome the structural and personalized organicism of the left¹⁸. In addition, for this criterion to be able to be formed as a force for social transformation, it would be necessary to verify two minimum conditions, i.e., a platform that is the basis for the struggle, and a cultural change that is founded on the conviction of the people's transforming capacity¹⁹. The appeal to all sectors 'not aligned' to raise awareness and mobilize the people for the change of political culture, is accompanied by the conviction that the same to be given has to be channeled by a social force, and, to be definitely realized, must necessarily guaranteeing communities the possibility to politically organize.

To implement these ideas, in 1965 the results of a year of meetings with dissatisfied intellectuals and progressive leaders were structured by Camilo on a platform, it is considered the starting point to create a Frente Unido. The reasons for the Frente Unido are evidenced in an insightful reflection on power and conflict. More specifically, the platform tends to a policy oriented towards the benefit of the majority, as a result of its access to power. That is, the platform launches the concept of popular power, indispensable for the structural change of political power and the implementation of the programmatic purposes of the document²⁰.

In this sense, therefore, the conformation of a Frente Unido symbolized the achievement of the unity of the popular movement for the purposes of the 'revolution'. In spite of the great enthusiasm generated in different popular sectors, many were difficulties that, as anticipated, culminated with his connection to the guerril-

¹⁷ "We have to achieve revolutionary union over the ideologies that separate us. Colombians have been very given to philosophical discussions and speculative divergences. We get lost in discussions that, although from the theoretical point of view are very valuable, in the current conditions of the country, they are completely Byzantine". Presentation in Homenaje Nacional, Universidad Nacional de Colombia (May 22, 1965). On the question of the importance of unity, see among others Fundación Colectivo Frente Unido (2014).

¹⁸ "We need the union above the groups... the spectacle of the Colombian left is pitiful. The leaders of the different progressive groups, many times, put more emphasis on the fights they have with each other than in their struggle against the ruling class" (Torres Restrepo, 1965, in Hindrics and Foncillas).

¹⁹ "We need national aims that channel our energies and the energies of the entire Colombian people. We have been developing and proposing a platform that summarizes the long-term goals of a revolutionary action. Only the dynamics of the events will impose the union and these facts will have to make the dough. In the village there are common needs, common sufferings, common aspirations. That's why it will be, ultimately, the people will teach us how we should perform the union" (Torres Restrepo, 1965, in Hindrics and Foncillas).

²⁰ In relation to the programmatic purposes, the document highlighted: agrarian and urban reform, community action, commercial development, tax policy, monetary policy, nationalizations, international relations, health, family, childhood and women, social crimes, armed force. The complete document can be downloaded in Centro Estudios "Miguel Enríquez", CEME, http://www.archivochile.com/Homenajes/camilo/d/H_doc_de_CT-0037.pdf

la. These difficulties were condensed into the presence of a strong ideological colonialism even among the opposition groups.

This observation pushes Camilo to a sharp criticism of the left-wing forces, and the understanding of this criticism requires linking this observation to the strongly conflictual dynamics of the Colombian scenario, characterized by a strong stigmatization and annihilation of the opposition. In this condition of extreme violence that has occupied the Colombian scene in the second half of the Twentieth Century, Torres highlights the need to generate a change in the political culture, a change that allows emancipation and pushes towards a definitive transformation of institutionality²¹ in order to get rid of personalization and instrumentalization.

For Camilo, this need would explain the inability of the left to connect ordinary people, because, although embodying the dream, it is incapable of favoring the formation of another type of political culture, based on the construction of an ethical-political project of empowered citizenship. In fact, the requirement to refute conformism and support dissatisfaction through political action, is the essential basis of socio-political transformations. More simply, militant non-conformity is transposed into 'effective love', in political practice, demonstrating, in addition, the importance for this purpose of the unity of the popular classes²². Following this line, the Camilist thought goes further, and it perceives the overcoming of the party grouping and the usefulness of the unit generating popular empowerment.

Popular empowerment is converted into an authentic alternative of power as a "class consciousness", and the latter must be understood not in a romantic and ideological sense but as a consciousness - on the part of the popular classes - of their needs²³.

2. For a Latin American Sociology

A minimum common denominator of the writings evaluated in the previous paragraphs, can be identified in the importance recognized by the *camilista* thought to

²¹ "It's necessary that the intellectuals who want the good of this popular class take awareness of their responsibility in the current social political situation. The people need national and concrete purposes of socio-economic development. The people need unity around to technical and rational phases. The people needs a team of leaders whose problematic is essentially realistic and adapted to the concrete Colombian circumstances. Leaders who are capable of abandoning all personalism for the attainment of a scientific ideal. Leaders who are capable of abandoning every sentimental and traditional element that isn't justified by the technique. Leaders who are capable of dispensing with the philosophical and normative elements, not in his personal life or in his ultimate goals, but as those represent dissociative elements between all those who seek concrete and scientific action justified in favor of the majorities and in favor of the country. Leaders who are able to dispense with the imported theoretical schemes and use their abilities to look for Colombian roads, to a definitive and solid transformation of our institutions" (Torres Restrepo, 1965, in Hindrics and Focillias).

²² "The political parties, by dividing Colombian society vertically and by grouping in the electoral struggles the popular class in antagonistic fractions opposing feelings and traditions, they prevented the constitution of a class party. The absence of this party ensured the privileges of the ruling class and its dominance over the majority and popular class, serves at the same time to give socio-economic security to the ruling class" (Torres Restrepo, 1965, in Umaña Luna, 2003, p. 88).

²³ "The popular class seems disillusioned with democratic electoral systems and therefore abstains in the elections. It doesn't consider itself represented by lefts' leaders, whose problematic appears maladapted and whose interests are often revealed as selfish. The popular class, more and more, she trusts herself and distrusts the elements of the other classes" (Torres Restrepo, 1965, in Umaña Luna, 2003, p. 89).

education²⁴, fundamental element for the development of a country and its economic-productive growth.

To this end, Torres explains the importance of university and scientific autonomy as a criterion that allows educational institutions to fulfill their social function, and, in this sense, it is essential to free universities from the influences of parties and guarantee to university institutions an adequate public financing. Autonomy and freedom that Camilo understands as the result of a broader and necessary process of participation, of struggles and student organization around specific aims²⁵, and that are shaped as significant requirements to drive towards social change. More specifically, the university contributes significantly to the formation of a human being, completing it with scientific training and ethical solidity, thus preparing the new generations to guide the processes of socio-political transformation²⁶.

It should be noted, the foundation that Camilo identifies in this type of university training, i.e., scientific for learning knowledge and tools that allow to investigate and solve problems, and ethics, aimed at the prioritization of collective interest.

In this perspective, inevitably, Camilo's reflection on education is related to the conception of the love of one's neighbor for "effective love", for the social commitment of Christian solidarity, and is expressed in the Camilist consideration of a science at the service of man, which is necessary especially in the Latin American context²⁷.

According to Torres, the construction of a different and alternative management model depend of this type ethical-humanistic training; a model which allows insisting more on the understanding of social incidences²⁸, and that is the result of positive research processes of reality, because *universities can't refrain from contemplating the problem of social research. Social problems are eminently concrete; they depend on each culture and each society.*

A conception that returns to being a practical commitment with the proposal for the creation of an institute of social research: in the 1960, the School of Sociology of the National University was born, linking Torres to the board of directors and to the teaching staff. The construction of a national project of interdisciplinary humanistic culture, will be raised by Camilo in the paper "Sociología en Colombia" (1961) (Sociology in Colombia), which out the pillars that represent the justifica-

²⁴ The citations of this subtitle refer to the following writings of Torres: "Camilo opina sobre la vida universitaria" (1947); "Los problemas sociales en la universidad actual" (1956); "La universidad y el cambio social" (1964); "Crítica y autocrítica" (1964); and "Mensaje a los estudiantes" (1965), recompiled by Aguilera Peña and Moncayo (2002).

²⁵ "The federation of Colombian students doesn't an institution that lacks an object. On the contrary, it obeys an imperious need. The need to make clear the collectives wishes of the university student and show their value with the force produced by the unity of action and conformity an identical thought" (Torres Restrepo, 1947, in Aguilera Peña and Moncayo, 2002).

²⁶ "To the future professionals that indispensable knowledge to investigate and solve the specific problems of your country, of your society" (Torres Restrepo, 1964, in Aguilera Peña – Moncayo, 2002).

²⁷ "Where the disproportion of development of the material elements with respect to the development of the human elements is greater, the urgency of human formation it's more pressing" (Torres Restrepo, 1956, in Aguilera Peña and Moncayo, 2002).

²⁸ "That the social problems are the ones that most insistently demand a solution and those that most concern a modern man; national and international policy is oriented nowadays according to them. The various sciences: medicine, engineering, architecture, psychology, economics ... they insist more and more on their social incidents" (Torres Restrepo, 1956, in Aguilera Peña and Moncayo, 2002).

tion for the foundation of this Faculty, identified in the renewal of social scientific thinking and of universities²⁹.

The objectivity that characterizes the *camilista* thought, takes him to demonstrate the importance that had the Marxism for the social sciences and, although criticizing the ‘creole communism’ (as well as the Christian democracy and the liberalism) by its inability to pose real solutions, he will continue highlighting the importance of relations with all forces interested in the revolution³⁰.

Beyond criticism, his reflection continues to focus on the meaning of conducting, in conservative Colombia, the first Sociology Faculty in Latin America, thus making a first step towards the transformation of the country's anachronistic mentality. In this perspective, in the document “El problema de la estructuración de una autentica sociología latinoamericana (1961)” (The problem of structuring an authentic Latin American sociology), he emphasizes the cultural subordination of this discipline. He also highlights its subsidiary nature deriving from the import of its results and the lack of emancipation of scientific research in the region and, therefore, its place between anachronism and colonialism, which can only be overcome if it structures an authentically Latin American sociology. In fact, this sociology must be situated in reality and in consideration of the Latin American characteristics but, at the same time, linked and enriched with the experiences and criticisms of European and North American sociologists. A sociology, then, molded in socio-cultural terms, renewed in terms of methodology, whose accent should be the insistence on the observation of reality and on the practice rather than nominalism³¹, and it can't avoid problems such as agrarian reform, revolution, transformation.

In conclusion, attention should again be focused on the transcendence of *camilista* speculation: there aren't inhibited issues in the social sciences, just as there isn't reason not to commit, in a “non-conformist” style, to the “revolutionary” trial of educating and acting for continue to strengthening democracy³².

²⁹ More in particular: A. The search from the empirical-positive to the objectivity. B. Work in equipment to guarantee greater contributions both in facts, data and figures as in the qualitative, in the conceptual construction and in the formulation of his thesis. C. Hierarchize the problems emphasizing on the most urgent. D. The importance of extension as disclosure of the research results. To deepen, see Torres Restrepo (1985); Cataño (1986).

³⁰ In “Mensaje a los comunistas”, Frente Unido n. 2 de 1965. The complete document can be downloaded in Centro Estudios “Miguel Enríquez”, CEME, www.archivochile.com/Homenajes/camilo/d/H_doc_de_CT-0025.pdf

³¹ “But nevertheless, I think that it would be to the detriment of an authentic scientific realization, discarding all human wealth of the scientist, although that wealth isn't an element that we could classify as strictly methodological. Imagination, intuition, general culture, idealism, generosity are imponderable qualitative elements that, at times, can define what that we usually call, a scientist. Within these ‘existential’ elements, is to live the problems of his time and of his concrete society” (Torres Restrepo, 1961).

³² “I only want to encourage students to make contact with the authentic sources of information to determine what is the moment, what is your responsibility and consequently what will have to be the necessary response. If they “ascend to the popular class”, without any kind of paternalism, with the spirit more than learn that of teaching, they will be able to objectively judge the historical moment. It would be sterile and unfortunate that Colombian students that have been the spark of the revolution remained on the sidelines of this for any reason; for lack of information, for superficiality, for selfishness, irresponsibility or fear. Let's hope that the students respond to the call made by the motherland in this transcendental moment of its history and, for that, they have the courage to listen to it and follow it with unlimited generosity” (Torres Restrepo, 1965, in Aguilera Peña and Moncayo, 2002).

Conclusion

The actuality of the *camilista* reflection can't be ignored. Beyond the icon, this reflection gives us a legacy that materializes and declines in all levels of our present. Undoubtedly, for his time, Camilo was an innovator, representing an unusual way of conceiving the social, the political, the religious. This atypical nature is condensed into "integrity" of commitment, where the center of academic activity and the center of all social activities is the man, for the training of citizens, of professionals focused on service, complete and ethical, committed to solving social problems and overcome the difficulties that arise and fuel underdevelopment and individualism. In this sense, the way in which Torres analyzes the society of his time is masterful, as is the prediction, through the connection in it, of the situation of the farmer and the consequences of urbanization, and, finally, the search for a true social and institutional structural transformation to overcome differences and exclusion.

In the same way, the path that he draws in terms of political praxis, focused on the need for union - which continues to be one of the problems of the Colombian left -, a unity of popular sectors and social organizations based on common intentions directed at the collective interest, for the conformation of an authentic democracy. The interconnections between the path of faith and its humanist reflection are configured as two fundamental variables to understand its political action. In a global context of great concerns and transformations, Camilo Torres becomes aware of his reality, and constitutes himself as a bridge: in his discourse he has gone beyond the levels of theoretical discourse, his Christianity is transformed into an approach to social realities, not starting from Christian dogmatic theory or hierarchical relationship - strongly criticized by him - but starting from practical action, making his profession of faith a perfect homily in his priestly work. The formation of a human citizenship, engaged in social change, requires a path characterized by a de-ideologization of discourse and a politicization of practice. This combination would lead to a form of utopian "pluralism" - unity in diversity - which is not only the foundation of Camilist thinking, but the essence of democracy.

References

- Aguilera Peña, M. & Moncayo, V.M. (2002). *Camilo Torres y la Universidad Nacional de Colombia*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
- Alvárez, J. & Restrepo, C. (1966). *Camilo Torres*. Medellín: Coppel-Antorcha.
- Barrado Barquilla, J. & Rodríguez, S. (1997). *Los Dominicos y el Nuevo Mundo, siglos XIX-XX*. Salamanca: Editorial San Esteban.
- Broderich, W.J. (1977). *Camilo Torres, el cura guerrillero*. Barcelona: Grijalbo.
- Broderick, W.J. (1996). *Camilo Torres Restrepo*. Bogotá: Planeta.
- Cataño, G. (1986). *La sociología en Colombia: balance crítico*. Bogotá: Plaza & Janés.
- Cerutti Guldberg, H. (1983). *Filosofía de la liberación latinoamericana*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Cubides, F. (2010). *Camilo Torres: testimonios sobre su figura y su época*. Bogotá: La Carreta Editores.
- Fundación Colectivo Frente Unido (eds.). (2014). *Unidad en la diversidad. Camilo Torres y el Frente Unido del Pueblo*. Bogotá: Desde Abajo.
- Giraldo, M. (ed.). (2015). *Camilo, mirar y juzgar... soñar y actuar... impactos y proyecciones*. Bogotá: Universidad Pedagógica Nacional y Editorial el Búho.
- Guzmán Campos, G. (1975). *El padre Camilo Torres*. México: Siglo XXI Editores.
- Guzmán, G., Umaña Luna, E. & Fals Borda, O. (1962). *La violencia en Colombia. 1ª edición*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Facultad de Sociología.

- Hindrics, A. & Foncillas, F. (1965). *Reportaje a Camilo Torres. En Centros de Estudios Miguel Enríquez*. Archivo Chile. http://www.archivochile.com/Homenajes/camilo/d/H_doc_de_CT-0042.pdf
- Lartegury, J. (1967). Camilo Torres, la liberación del continente americano. *Revista Blanco y Negro*, 2887.
- Lois, J. (1988). *Teología de la liberación: opción por los pobres*. Madrid: Iepala Ediciones.
- Maritain, J. (2001). *Humanismo integral. Problemas espirituales y temporales de una nueva cristiandad*. Madrid: Palabra.
- Martínez Morales, D. (2011). Camilo Torres Restrepo, Cristianismo y Violencia. *Theologica Xaveriana*, 61(171), pp. 131-168.
- Pérez Prieto, V. (2016). Los orígenes de la teología de la liberación en Colombia: Richard Shaull, Camilo Torres, Rafael Ávila, “Golconda”, sacerdotes para América Latina, cristianos por el socialismo y comunidades eclesiales de base. *Cuestiones Teológicas*, 43(99), pp. 73-108.
- Torres Restrepo, C. (1961). *El problema de la estructuración de una auténtica Sociología Latinoamericana*. Barcelona: Nova Terra.
- Torres Restrepo, C. (1965). *La revolución: imperativo cristiano*. Bogotá: Ediciones del Caribe.
- Torres Restrepo, C. (1982). *La violencia y los cambios socioculturales en las áreas rurales colombianas*. Medellín: Universidad de Antioquia.
- Torres Restrepo, C. (1985). *Escritos*. Bogotá: Fundación Pro-Cultura.
- Torres, C., Fals-Borda, O. & Arias, B. (2010). *Camilo: un pensamiento vigente*. Bogotá: Memoria Histórica.
- Umaña Luna, E. (2003). *Camilo y el nuevo humanismo. Paz con justicia social*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
- Umaña Luna, E. (1996). *Camilo vive*. Barranquilla: Editorial Don Bosco.