



*El pensamiento militar del Mayor General Pedro Agustín
Pérez Pérez*
The military thought of General Pedro Agustín Pérez Pérez

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Resumen

En el teatro de operaciones militares de Guantánamo, durante las guerras por la independencia, se manifestó la elevada capacidad de Pedro Agustín Pérez para conducir la lucha armada con habilidad, astucia, flexibilidad e inteligencia, empleando todas las formas de lucha posibles. Sobre esta personalidad existe abundante bibliografía pasiva vinculada a su actuación militar, así como referencias a su pensamiento y acción. Sin embargo, las miradas a su desempeño militar resultan escasas, por lo que es un tema insuficientemente explorado. Los métodos empleados para dar solución al problema fueron: análisis documental, histórico lógico, análisis y síntesis e inducción deducción.

Palabras clave: Pensamiento militar; Lucha armada; Pedro Agustín Pérez; Guantánamo.

Abstract

In the theater of military operations of Guantánamo during the wars for the independence showed Pedro Agustín Pérez high capacity to drive the armed fight with ability, cunning, flexibility and intelligence, using all the forms of possible fight. On this personality abundant passive bibliography linked to its military performance exists, as well as you index to its thought and action. However, the looks to their military acting are scarce, for what is an insufficiently explored topic. The methods used to give solution to the problem were: logical documental, historical analysis, analysis and synthesis and induction deduction.

Words key: Military thought; Fights arma; Pedro Agustín Pérez, Guantánamo.

Introduction

The history of military thought is the branch of military history that studies the formation and evolution of military-theoretical conceptions and military-technical progress. It allows to know the regularities and tendencies of these activities, their relative dependence on economic conditions and to reveal the factors that, in each epoch, accelerated or retarded their development. Engels (2003) pointed out: "Armament, composition, organization, tactics and strategy depend above all on the level of production and communications reached in each case. [...] the influence of brilliant military leaders is limited, in the best of cases, to adapting the mode of combat to the new weapons and the new combatants. (p. 115)

The Center for Military Studies of the FAR, defines military thought as:

[...] the system of theoretical positions assumed by an individual, a collective or a group of them around basic issues of their preparation and conduct of war as an armed fighting, such as strategy, tactics, organization of troops, direction and command, military construction, regulatory basis, discipline and others, which condition the forms and methods of action to which they systematically resort during their military work. (p. 17)

As a branch, military thought is based on the experience of wars, of which it is its intellectual reflection, which contributes to achieve a representation of the most important results of the development of military activity in one or another stage of history. It is based on the military-theoretical works elaborated in the past, as well as on the practical activity of certain military leaders and units, which is evidenced by the results of fighting in arms.

Military thought is manifested in the theoretical production, combat documents, letters, memoirs, diaries, chronicles and other documents generated by the military chief under study, or by his contemporaries, in addition to related historiographical studies. However, the military activity developed throughout his life, including successes and failures, constitutes the main source of information to undertake these studies.

About the historical figure of General Pedro Agustín Pérez, Periquito Pérez,, there is an abundant passive bibliography, linked to his military performance, as well as judgments and references to his thought and action in testimonies of his contemporaries. However, primary sources - campaign diaries, war reports, correspondence, testimonies and other war documents - are scarce, so his military conceptions must be extracted from his military performance.

In the exploration of the sources in the general historiography, particularly in the regional and local studies linked to Guantánamo, it was not verified the existence of a systematized study that would facilitate to determine the military thought of general Pedro Agustín Pérez, which has made possible to work in the epistemological gaps to unveil new elements that enrich the historiography referred to the research topic, reason why it is a topic insufficiently explored in the researches and the known theories do not explain to plenitude the researched problem. These limitations allow identifying as a problem the characteristics of the military thought of General Pedro Agustín Pérez manifested in his combative actions during the independence wars in Guantánamo, and the objective is to reveal his military thought through the analysis of his performance in the fighting in arms against the Spanish forces in this region.

Development

The study of the military thought of Pedro Agustín Pérez, is inserted in the effort to make incursions in the antecedents of the contemporary national liberating ideal in Cuba. His ideas, and the revolutionary practical work, constitute the synthesis of the combative traditions of the Liberation Army in the 19th century in Guantánamo, and the critical and creative assimilation of the most advanced currents of thought of his time that he could know, particularly the ideals of human emancipation and national liberation, as carriers of the most revolutionary conceptions, in antagonistic opposition to the autonomist and annexationist currents, and to the conservative positions against independence and social justice.

Major General Pedro Agustín Pérez is the highest exponent of Guantánamo's military thought. In this recognition it is taken into account that he had the merit of combining in practice, in a brilliant way, the best conceptions about the popular war, prolonged and of systematic attrition in the scene of operations in the region of Guantánamo. The numerous and decisive victories he obtained over the colonialist troops, allow us to place him among the generals with the greatest tactical talent in our wars of independence.

Pedro Agustín Pérez was born in Tiguabos, Guantánamo, on April 29, 1844, in the midst of a well-to-do country family that professed deep loyalty to Spain. His ancestry goes back to the first original settlers who -together with other families that fled from Caney, in Santiago de Cuba- formed the Guantánamo patriciate at the end of the 17th century.

Castellanos (2008), referring to the Pérez family, said: "They were powerful landowners. They were brave, courageous, with Indian traits. They dominated because of their pedigree, their roots,

their deep and fruitful work in the fields and because they did not allow themselves to be dominated" (p. 2). (p. 2).

Without a solid school formation - he barely reached primary education - his childhood passed under the influence and tutelage of his uncle and godfather Miguel Ignacio Pérez y Céspedes, colonel of the Indian Squads of Guantanamo, military structure, at the service of Spain, which had its origins among the years 1820-1830 when, in view of the increase of the runaway to the bush by black slaves, the colonial authorities selected a group of natural men of the region, mostly descendants of Indians, knowledgeable of the geography and skilled in the handling of weapons, to form a combative unit to operate in the abrupt Guantanamo mountain range.

In this regard, Ochando (1878), said:

Cubans were also the soldiers of those brave Guantanamo Squadrons, whose name is associated to that of our most brilliant battalions, in as many acts of arms there have been in the rough mountains of that jurisdiction, and Cubans also the chiefs who directed them from fathers to sons, transmitting with an indomitable courage and a superior intelligence of this war, a love never denied towards our Spain. (p. 157).

Precisely, the Guantanamo squadrons constituted the first military school of Periquito, who joined their ranks at the age of 15. When the Ten Years' War broke out, the number of guerrillas at the service of Spain increased and Miguel Perez was promoted to Commander. Among his relatives he chose the officers: his son José José de los Santos Pérez Ruiz (named in 1871 Lieutenant of the Section of Volunteers of the Headquarters of Bayate, Cuba. On December 20, 1879, he was promoted to the position of Colonel of the General Staff of Plazas, maintaining the command of the Squadrons. On January 3, 1880, he was transferred to the Army, with the rank of Colonel. In 1886 he was promoted to Brigadier), he was the second in command; Pedro Agustín Pérez was appointed officer of one of the squadrons and began to render military services to Spain. Could it be otherwise? It was the only thing he had seen and what he lived every day in the bosom of his family.

It calls the attention that in none of the consulted sources it is appreciated the participation of Pedro Agustín Pérez in facts of weapons, neither repression in combat against the mambises in the Ten Years War. Nevertheless, in the War of 1895, Martí (1991), pointed out when evaluating this circumstance. "And he served Spain in the squadrons, in the Great War! Family loyalty to Miguel Pérez". (p. 226).

Within the ranks of the peninsular army, in 1877, he cooperated with the pro-independence forces, particularly with Arcid Duverger Lafargue, to whom he supplied intelligence information and war park. At the end of the conflict, in 1879, he began to conspire from the Reconciliation Lodge, subordinate to Colonel Silverio del Prado Pacheco. When the plot was discovered, he was sent prisoner to Cayo Toro Fort, in Guantanamo Bay. Pardoned by the efforts of Santos Pérez, the Spanish authorities appointed him Military Commander of the Palma de San Juan neighborhood. At the outbreak of the Small War, in September 1879, at the head of the 114 men of the company he commanded, Periquito raised in arms and took the forts of El Vínculo and Burenes, where he seized weapons and war supplies. Subordinated to José Maceo and Guillermo Moncada, he participated in various combat actions that earned him the promotion to colonel.

On December 7, 1879, he was taken prisoner in a military action and was transferred from the Guantanamo prison to another one in Santiago de Cuba, where he met General Flor Crombet. Then, he was sent to the dungeons of the Morro Castle, from where he made a spectacular escape on the night of December 24, becoming, since then, a legendary man of the mambisado.

After the amnesty proclaimed by the Spanish government after the end of the war, he returned to his farm in Boca de Jaibo, dedicated himself to working the land and turned his residence into a pro-independence conspiracy center. Among 1880 and 1890, he gathered veterans of the War of 1868, among them commanders Pedro Ramos, Prudencio Martínez, José Mejías, and Luis González. In 1883 he established contacts with Antonio Maceo, who was in Costa Rica, and since then he assumed the military command of the conspiracy in the Guantanamo region.

In 1890, when Antonio Maceo arrived in Santiago de Cuba, he was appointed head of the conspiracy in the territories of Guantanamo, Baracoa, Mayari and Sagua de Tanamo. At the beginning of 1893, José Martí appointed him subdelegate of the Cuban Revolutionary Party in Guantanamo. In October of that year, as a result of the denunciation of a peninsular spy, he was forced to escape to the mountains, from where he led the conspiracy that resulted in the simultaneous uprisings of February 24, 1895 in Guantanamo, under the subordination of General Jose Guillermo Moncada.

Under his command, the patriots of the region led seven simultaneous uprisings that day, and the attack on the coastal fort of San Nicolas, Hatibonico, led by Enrique Tudela Garcia, which was the first Mambo victory in the new war.

He supported, from the wild mountains of Yateras, General Antonio Maceo and other expeditionaries of the schooner Honor, disembarked on April 1st, 1895. A small unit of his forces located José Maceo, who was wandering in the mountains, and transferred him to the Philippines. He assisted José Martí, Máximo Gómez and other expeditionaries after the landing at Playitas de Cajobabo, on April 11. His forces, under the command of José Maceo, achieved the victory of Arroyo Hondo on April 25. Martí (1991), impressed with the level that the revolution had reached in these regions, expressed on April 15: "What is certain is this: here there would be as many Cubans raised as weapons arrived". (p. 128).

Together with Antonio Maceo, in 1895, he fought in Jobito on April 13, where he received the rank of Brigadier General for his performance at the head of the vanguard; in the battle of Sao del Indio, (August 31-September 2). He participated in several military actions subordinate to José Maceo, chief of the 1st Corps, and took command of the Guantanamo Brigade. He was wounded in the battle of Paso del Brasil. He gave decisive aid to the expeditionary forces led by Calixto García, who disembarked at Maraví, in the Baracoa jurisdiction on March 26, 1896.

When José Maceo fell in combat at Loma del Gato, on July 5, 1896, the board of generals of the 1st Corps appointed him to assume command, a position he held provisionally until the 20th of the same month. On August 13, 1896, he was named chief of the 1st Division, at the head of which he operated, in addition to the territory under his command, in Jiguaní, Bayamo, Manzanillo, Holguín and Las Tunas. On August 13 of that year he received the rank of Major General, and remained at the head of the Guantanamo Division.

Between 1897 and the first days of 1898, until the beginning of the Spanish-Cuban-American war, numerous combative actions of diverse nature appear in the campaign diaries, war reports, correspondence, testimonies and other documents of the war linked to the Guantanamo chiefs, which demonstrates the magnitude of the fighting in the territory, without being subordinated to the arrival of assurances from abroad, that is to say, it had to base the confrontation to colonialism in the own efforts and in the resources snatched to the enemy.

During this period, the forces commanded by General Pedro Agustín Pérez had managed to maintain the vitality of the armed fighting. His units developed actions against enemy columns, attacks on cities and seizure of towns; assault on convoys, blockade of supply routes and against the sources of financial income of colonialism, particularly the destruction of coffee plantations, sugar cane plantations, sugar mills and sections of railroad tracks, in the jurisdictions of

Guantánamo, Mayarí, Sagua and Baracoa. They dominated the fields, to the point that the Spanish historian Reverter (1899) assured that the region was in the most complete impunity (p. 556).

Between the months of June and July of 1898, he prevented the 2nd Spanish Brigade of General Felix Pareja Mesa, from reinforcing the besieged square of Santiago de Cuba.

In his combative military career, the forces he commanded developed tactical actions consisting in the assault to cities and towns, as a modality of the offensive combat to obtain armament, ammunition and other war supplies; to facilitate the incorporation of new soldiers to the revolution; to elevate the combatant morale of the combatants and to influence in the political state of the inhabitants of those populations.

The colonialist forces were unable to react adequately to the surprise attacks, due to the speed with which they were carried out, taking advantage of the surprise factor in the night and early morning hours, and the timely information provided by the collaborators about the military and civilian objectives of the enemy in the chosen points. Likewise, they required an adequate designation of the participants and the available armament, as well as the selection of the appropriate roads for the hidden displacement until accessing the towns and cities.

Among the tactical actions of guerrilla fighting, defensive combat was used exceptionally to repel superior enemy forces. In this type of combative action, the insurgents did not compromise the integrity of their forces, nor did they subordinate it to the maintenance of the positions they occupied on the ground.

The incursion, as a tactical procedure, was usually employed by means of surprise actions of short duration, against specific objectives, previously studied. For its development, it was essential the hidden displacement of the participating forces, generally of scarce number, the rapidity in its progress and the retreat when the surprised enemy tried to react and put in danger the survival of the attacking forces. The incursions against cities, villages, cultivation areas, forts, sugar mills and isolated detachments in the farthest points of the military lines were remarkable, in which they executed the burning of sugar cane fields, the destruction of orchards and the plundering of commercial establishments.

The forests and the manigua offered possibilities for the development of ambushes of harassment and annihilation, when facilitating the silent displacement and the masking of the insurrectionists, unlike the Spanish forces that moved their columns by the habitual roads. It was transcendental the ambush of annihilation of February 9, 1898, under the personal direction of General Pedro

Agustín Pérez, against forces of the Squads and Guerrillas of Guantanamo, as a result of which they caused the death of their chief, commander Pedro Garrido Romero. This operation was carried out in the vanguard of the Spanish military lines, near the town of Jamaica.

Other ambushes and cavalry charges were carried out against the garrisons of the sugar mills and against columns of the three arms, to which they caused numerous casualties, took weapons, ammunition, horses and other war supplies.

The Guantanamo forces participated in important offensive campaigns against towns and cities of the eastern province, under the direct command of Calixto García, among them, the combat of Yerba de Guinea (September 24-26, 1896) and, the following year, the siege and capture of Jiguaní (March 12), Las Tunas (August 28-30) and Guisa (November 28-29).

During the Spanish-Cuban-American war, the application of the experiences of the Cuban insurrectional fighting facilitated Pedro Agustín Pérez the development of the fighting in arms in conditions of irregular warfare of strategic transcendence. From the tactical point of view, the actions of the Guantanamo Regiment and the 1st Marine Battalion dislodged the Spanish forces and ensured the use of the southern lobe of the bay as a coaling ground, communications center and departure base for the forces that forced the surrender of Manzanillo and the invasion of Puerto Rico.

At the strategic level, the troops of the 1st Division of the 1st Corps of the Liberation Army ensured the amphibious landing of the Cuban assault echelon that later marched towards Daiquiri, surrounded the forces of the 2nd Spanish Brigade, contributed to the securing of the beachhead for the landing of the 5th U.S. Expeditionary Army Corps. They helped secure the beachhead for the landing of the 5th U.S. Expeditionary Army Corps and prevented General Félix Pareja's offensive against the disembarked 1st Marine Infantry Battalion, tactical cooperation and the regrouping of Spanish forces towards Santiago de Cuba, the main direction of the war.

With these operations, the troops of General Pedro Agustín Pérez exerted a strategic influence on the course of the Spanish-Cuban-American war, by contributing to the achievement of objectives superior to the tactical ones, thus accelerating the rapid victory of the joint forces over the Spanish forces, which were notably affected to maintain their combative disposition.

Undoubtedly, these operations constituted the highest point of Periquito's military talent. The historian Regino E. Boti (2008), managed to portray in all its dimension the personality of Pedro A. Pérez from the military point of view, when he wrote:

He was a subaltern very zealous in the fulfillment of his duty who was at the place of the rendezvous as punctually as very few superior chiefs did. Periquito Perez had a clear military spirit. He was brave. He knew his region inch by inch. He skillfully practiced our peculiar guerrilla tactics. The princes of our militia, who had him under their command showed him as a model of an organizing, disciplined and disciplined soldier. José Maceo always wanted to have him by his side [...] Connatural in him conspiracy and war, he managed to mathematically complete the revolution in his territory; his troops being the only ones that since the recruitment were directed and organized militarily [...]. (p. 100).

Conclusions

From the analysis of the levels of military organization and the performance of its arms in harmony, it can be affirmed that in 1898, the 1st Division of the Liberation Army in Guantanamo was a functional, experienced corps with a growing combative capacity. Some of its services such as exploration, security, communications and, particularly, the logistics of a force that lived practically from the country, was going from less to more, as a result of the prolonged popular war and of systematic attrition that it developed, while in the Spanish army the opposite was happening. In the scene of operations in Guantanamo, the ability of Major General Pedro Agustín Pérez to conduct the armed fighting with skill, cleverness, flexibility and intelligence, using all possible forms of fighting, on the basis of the idea and plan of Major General Calixto García Iñiguez for the participation of the Guantanamo insurgent troops in the strategic operation near Santiago de Cuba, was manifested. Pedro A. Pérez managed to develop a military thought that positively influenced the conduct of the armed fighting and contributed substantial elements to the formation of the Cuban military art.

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