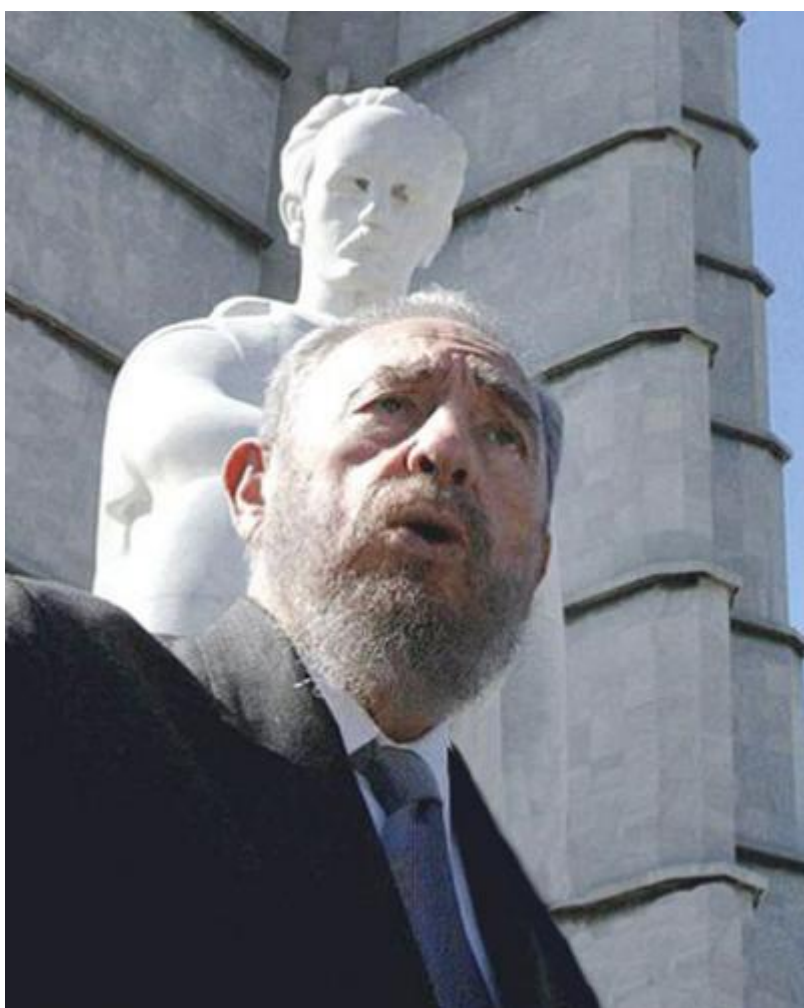


Two Universal Cubans United by a Common Concern: Environmental Protection



Two men of universal stature: one of them the National Hero of Cuba, Jose Marti, and the other the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, both had many things in common, besides their struggle for the independence and sovereignty of their homeland. Each one of them in their own epoch, with their brilliant speeches and cutting edge writings, voiced their concern about the environment.

In the ideas proclaimed by Jose Marti, keynoted by their beauty and their precise teachings, we may find numerous special references to the two worlds of nature, which he described as a mysterious, intimate and wonderful external world.

His verses and prose reflect elements of the environment and proclaim: "The world constantly bleeds over the crimes committed within it against nature..."

One century later, the protection of nature and of natural resources, as the basis of a sustainable development model, would become a strong idea proclaimed by Fidel Castro as expressed in his speeches and reflections published by the Cuban press.

As early as the 1970s, the Cuban Revolutionary leader said: "Humanity of the future will face enormous challenges in many areas. A humanity that is multiplying at a tremendous rate... which is watching with concern the exhaustion of some of its natural resources."

In a historic and much applauded speech delivered twenty years later in the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro, during the Earth Summit, Fidel warned that the Universe had one species facing the threat of extinction: Humankind.

His precise, dramatic speech sparked world wide impact and still today is a reference to many in the world.

In the opinion of experts, his message to the participants at the United Nations Earth Summit set up a deep mark in environmental thinking, not only in Cuba but in the rest of the world as well.

In fact, Fidel Castro denounced the root causes of the problem, which are the unequal distribution of resources and the application of technology not for human development but for the satisfaction of consumer societies, solely interested in luxury and wasteful practices.

This concern over the environment and the future of humankind is a constant in his memorable writings.

In one of them, published by the Cuban press, he would say: "The environment has been threatened for a long time. Will our species be able to surmount that barrier?"

He was constantly concerned about the environment, and much more recently he recalled his speech at the World's Earth Summit, emphasizing that today the dangers and threats facing the environment are much larger and pressing than at that time. And he issued an urgent call for the preservation of humankind, a species -- he insisted -- threatened with extinction.

He noted that the leaders of some of the most powerful nations in the world courteously applauded his speech but feverishly continued digging the grave of our species.

Fidel Castro was clear, precise and energetic in his struggle to leave a much better world to future generations. Such was the gist of his constant calls in international conferences to unite wills and efforts towards the preservation of the planet that provides a home to all of us.

Under his guidance, the Cuban Revolution developed a careful effort to preserve the environment, reduce environmental pollution caused by the generation of electricity and reduce the emissions of CO₂, which are the cause of the green house effect.

Fidel Castro, in sum, was an Apostle of the preservation of our planet as the fitting home of humanity, against whose extinction he valiantly and intelligently fought.

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