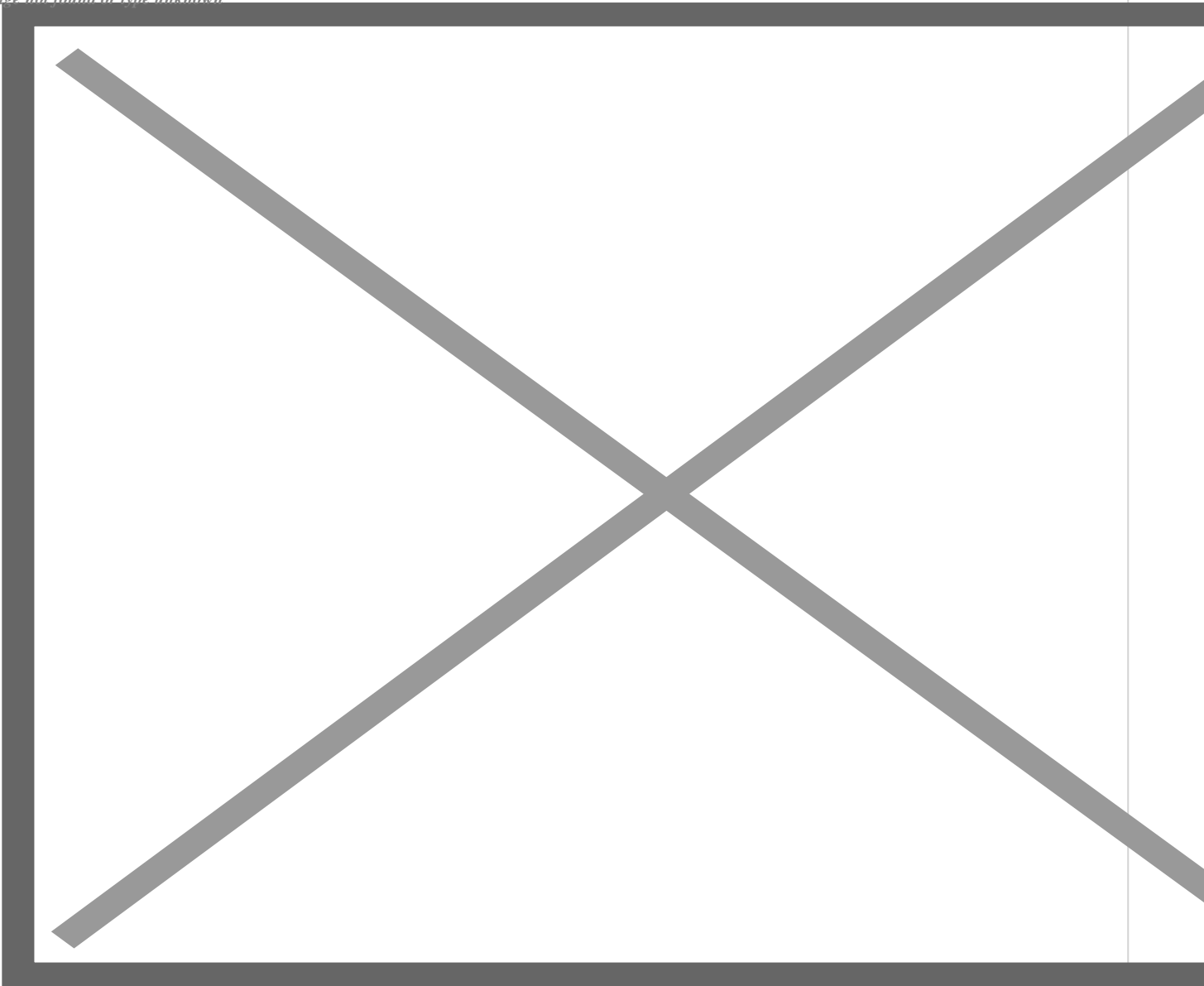


Fidel Castro: The man who was ahead of his time

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Havana, August 6 (RHC)-- The 97th anniversary of the birthday of the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, calls for paying tribute inside and outside the Caribbean country to one of the

most important politicians of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st.

Born in Biran, today's province of Holguin, on August 13, 1926, Fidel led one of the most influential insurgent movements in Latin America in the 1950s and, with his triumph, commanded one of the left-wing governments with the greatest impact.

He graduated with a law degree in 1950 and, during his work as a lawyer, represented the poor before leading the insurreccional movement.

In 1953, the centenary year of the birth of José Martí, Cuba's National Hero, he commanded the group of young people who launched an assault on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba and Carlos Manuel de Céspedes Barracks in the present-day province of Granma, both in the eastern part of the country.

Inferior in numbers and weapons, the assailants could not take either of the two fortresses, however, the action marked the beginning of the subsequent stage that included the exile of the main leaders, the clandestine combat, the landing of the Granma yacht in 1956, the armed struggle and the seizure of power in 1959.

In his plea for self-defense, after the actions of July 26, Fidel Castro put forward his project for a nation that included the transformation of Cuban society in contrast to the precarious situation suffered by Cuba at the time.

"The problems of the Republic can only be solved if we dedicate ourselves to fight for it with the same energy, honesty and patriotism that our liberators invested in creating it," the young lawyer assured the court.

His speech, which bore the name *La Historia me Absolverá*, not only established those known evils of the pseudo-republic, but also set forth a plan to retake the destiny of a free nation and his determination to command it.

"As for me, I know that prison will be hard as it has never been for anyone, pregnant with threats, with dastardly and cowardly cruelty. But I do not fear it, as I do not fear the fury of the miserable tyrant who took the lives of seventy of my brothers. Condemn me, it does not matter. History will absolve me," he said.

After the 1959 triumph, the Revolution challenged the United States as a model of resistance in Latin America and elsewhere.

According to historians, the Cuban process transformed the dependence established in the Monroe Doctrine with a far greater impact on the continent than any other Latin American insurrection.

In addition, Cuba achieved exemplary models of free education and health, with valuable results for the world, to which was added international collaboration in those sectors.

In addition, Cuba has achieved achievements in the fields of culture, sports, science and technology, among others, despite the economic and financial blockade that for more than 60 years has been the main obstacle to the country's development.

As the founder of the first socialist state in the western hemisphere, the Cuban leader designed, guided and executed a foreign policy of clear independence and global extension and internationalist teaching.

He also promoted on a worldwide scale the battle of the Third World against the current world economic order, in particular the foreign debt, the squandering of resources for military expenditures and neo-liberal globalization.

He advocated a policy of solidarity among the oppressed and respect for sovereignty within the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (Mnoal), an organization of which Cuba was a founder in 1961.

"Only a close alliance among all the progressive forces of the world will give us the necessary strength to defeat the still powerful forces of imperialism, colonialism, neocolonialism and racism, and successfully fight for the aspirations of justice and peace of all the peoples of the world," he said at the IV Summit of the organization, held in Algiers in 1973.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the then Cuban president headed, together with his Venezuelan counterpart, Hugo Chávez, the efforts for the unity and integration of Latin America and the Caribbean.

In April 2004, both led the way to a united America with the creation in Havana of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America-People's Trade Agreement (ALBA-TCP), as a multifaceted space for convergence.

Subsequently, other entities emerged, such as Petrocaribe, with a broad activity in the energy field, which was complemented by the positive restructuring of entities such as Mercosur and the formation of the Union of South American Nations (Unasur).

The most conclusive step was undoubtedly the founding in 2011, in Caracas, Venezuela, of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States as a mechanism of true regional representativeness, capable of prioritizing dialogue and transcendence over other considerations.

On July 31, 2006, the then president announced the provisional cessation of his activities as head of the Government, the Communist Party (PCC) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces in his Proclamation to the Cuban people.

After a complicated surgical operation, he announced that he would have to rest for several weeks and entrusted some of his functions to Party and State leaders.

In a proclamation to the nation, he stated, in essence, that he was leaving in the hands of Army General Raul Castro, his tasks at the head of the PCC and the State, and at the same time he called on the people to continue along the path he had set out.

"I do not harbor the slightest doubt that our people and our Revolution will fight to the last drop of blood to defend these and other ideas and measures that are necessary to safeguard this historic process," he wrote in this regard in his message.

He overcame his illness, although he did not take up his duties due to other health complications, as he acknowledged in 2008.

However, he accompanied the coming changes from his reflections published in the media and work in the direction of research and projects of agricultural productions.

On November 25, 2016, Raúl Castro announced the death of the man who was recognized as Commander in Chief, at the age of 90.

In compliance with his will, his remains were cremated.

During his lifetime, he maintained friendly relations with personalities from all over the world, such as leaders Nelson Mandela, Yasser Arafat, Indira Gandhi, writer Gabriel García Márquez and soccer player Diego Armando Maradona.

He also created close ties with regional leaders such as Hugo Chávez (1999-2013); Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010) of Brazil; Cristina Fernández (2007-2015) of Argentina; Evo Morales (2006-2019) of

Bolivia; Rafael Correa (2007-2017) of Ecuador; and Daniel Ortega (1985-1990 and 2007-) of Nicaragua.

His role in the consolidation of the revolutionary process; the economic and social transformations of the country; the development of education, health, sports, culture and science; the confrontation of US aggressions and the call for unity in the region made him a universal symbol of resistance.

(Source: Prensa Latina)

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