

"We are realists...we dream the impossible" - Che

"The truth must not only be the truth...it must also be told" - Fidel



FIRE THIS TIME

Revolutionary Voices Newsletter

February 2024

Cuba: 'Our Capacity to Resist and Win is Based on Socialism ...'

By Raúl Castro Ruz on January 1, 2024

Compatriots:

We arrive at the 65th anniversary of the triumph of our socialist Revolution. Many have been the challenges we have had to face to reach this point; but it has been worth it, the work of the Revolution and its social achievements, even in the midst of difficulties, corroborate this.

For Fidel has been the first thought of Cubans in this historic commemoration, especially here, in the heroic city of Santiago de Cuba that treasures his immortal remains, and also for all those who have fallen in the noble purpose of achieving and preserving the independence of the homeland.

We are gathered in the same place where Fidel proclaimed on January 1, 1959, the triumph of the only Revolution that has ever existed in Cuba, initiated on October 10, 1868 by Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, the Father of the Homeland, whose name this square bears.

By paradoxes of history, the then nascent Yankee empire consummated the military occupation of Cuba on January 1, 1899, therefore, its total domination over our island lasted exactly 60 years.

One of the most shameful and outrageous acts of the occupier in those days was to prevent the entry into the city of the troops of the Liberation Army commanded by Major General Calixto García, without whose action there is no

doubt that the Spaniards would have defeated those arrogant, but quite inept invaders all along the line. That is why Fidel, when he was at the gates of Santiago, said in his speech on Radio Rebelde: "This time the Mambises will enter Santiago de Cuba [...] The history of '95 will not be repeated", he concluded.



I remember that memorable night of January 1st, 1959.

As many know, by decision of the Commander in Chief I had arrived hours earlier in Santiago with the mission of consolidating the surrender of the garrison of the Moncada Barracks, some 5,000 men who were in this city, in addition to the main force of the Navy, and I was, as one more, among the crowd that filled this square.

Fidel, upon seeing me, ordered me to go up to the tribune and speak to those present, I only said a few brief

words that have not been preserved, but that is not important. The words of Fidel, who on that occasion warned us: "The Revolution begins now; the Revolution will not be an easy task, the Revolution will be a hard enterprise

full of dangers". Eight days later, after his triumphal entry into the capital, he insisted on this, when he said: "The joy is immense. And yet, there is still much to be done. Let us not fool ourselves into believing that everything will be easy in the future; perhaps everything will be more difficult in the future," he said.

It was his early warning not to overestimate successes and to prepare to face the most difficult option, and life proved him right. The road we have traveled has not been easy, we have had to face the permanent

and perverse aggressiveness of the enemy, which has even resorted to military invasion, terrorism and a ruthless and cruel blockade, condemned by the overwhelming majority of the nations of the world, in its failed attempt to destroy our Revolution and erase its inspiring example for other peoples, that it is possible to build a just and humane society, with equal opportunities for all.

The policy of permanent hostility and blockade of the United States Government is the main cause of the difficulties of our economy. There is no doubt about this reality, even though the enemy invests millions of dollars and much effort to hide it. It is seconded by some who act against their own homeland, either out of a desire for profit or simply out of the spirit of serfs. Others allow themselves to be misled by his lies, and in a certain way unconsciously play along with him, overwhelmed by daily difficulties. With the latter we cannot lose patience, we must listen to them, explain to them until we convince them with the powerful weapon of truth, which is on our side.

This does not mean in any way that we are unaware of our shortcomings and errors, which have never been of principle. The leadership of the Revolution has been characterized, throughout these 65 years, by its transparency and self-critical spirit, by discussing with the people any insufficiency, aware that only together we will be able to eradicate them.

On the unknown road of building socialism in a poor country subjected to constant aggressions, we have

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forced to create our own ways of doing things, evidence that the Cuban revolutionary process has always been characterized by an immense creative capacity.

Today we can say with healthy pride that neither external aggressions, nor the blows of nature, nor our own mistakes have prevented us from reaching this 65th anniversary. Here we are and here we will be! (Applause.)

This has been possible, in the first place, because of the proven resistance and self-confidence of our heroic people; because of the wise leadership of the Commander-in-Chief of the Cuban Revolution Fidel Castro Ruz; because of the existence of a Party that has become a worthy heir to the trust placed by the people in its leader, and because of the unity of the nation.

Comrade Díaz-Canel referred a few moments ago to this trajectory in his review of the epic lived by the Cubans during these 65 years, which extends to the difficult and unforgettable moments of the Moncada, the Granma and the struggle in the Sierra and the plains, until reaching the true triumph, a day like today.

And the greater the difficulties and dangers, the greater the demands, discipline and unity required. Not a unity achieved at any price, but one based on the principles so accurately defined by Fidel in his reflection of January 22, 2008, and I quote:

“Unity means sharing the struggle, the risks, the sacrifices, the objectives, ideas, concepts and strategies, arrived at through debates and analysis. Unity means the common struggle against annexionists, sellouts and corrupt people who have nothing to do with a revolutionary militant”.

And he added another essential idea: “We must avoid that, in the enormous sea of tactical criteria, the strategic lines are diluted and we imagine non-existent situations”.

Such is our unity, which did not arise by magic, which we have patiently built among all of us, brick by brick. In the Cuban Revolution there has been room for every sincere patriot, with the only requirement of being willing to confront injustice and oppression, to work for the good of the people and to defend their conquests.

In that forge of action and thought our Party was forged, alien to authoritarianism and impositions, listening and debating the different criteria and giving participation to all those willing to join in the work. Modesty, honesty, adherence to the truth, loyalty and commitment have been the key. In socialism

and its work, in unity and revolutionary ideology, our capacity to resist and win is sustained (Applause).

Unity is our main strategic weapon; it has allowed this small island to succeed in every challenge; it sustains the internationalist vocation of our people and its prowess in other lands of the world, following Martí's maxim that homeland is humanity. Let us take care of unity more than the apple of our eye! I have no doubt that this will be so. I am convinced that the Pinos Nuevos, our combative youth, will guarantee it.

The unity formed by the Party, the Government, the mass organizations and all our people, and as part of this the combatants of the Revolutionary Armed Forces and the Ministry of the Interior, is the shield against



which will crash, once again, all the subversive plans of the enemy, which include from the systematic use of lies to terrorism.

Today I can state with satisfaction that the Cuban Revolution, after 65 years of existence, far from weakening, is getting stronger (Applause), and as I already said a decade ago, on a day like today and in this very place, with no commitments to anyone at all, only to the people (Applause).

Compañeras and compañeros:

I know that I express the sentiment of the Historic Generation in ratifying the confidence in those who today occupy leadership responsibilities in our Party and Government, and in the other organizations and institutions of our society, from the highest positions to the tens of thousands of grassroots leaders who are in the front line of combat. In very difficult circumstances, the vast majority of them have been demonstrating with their actions the necessary revolutionary firmness and will to overcome the current difficulties and move forward together with our people.

Those who, due to insufficient capacity, lack of preparation or simply because they are

tired, are not up to the level demanded by the moment, should give their place to another comrade willing to assume the task.

I call on all our cadres to meditate every day on what more can be done to justify the trust and exemplary support of our compatriots, even in the midst of so many needs, not to be naïve or triumphalist, to avoid bureaucratic responses and any manifestation of routine and insensitivity, to find realistic solutions with what we have, without dreaming that something will fall from the sky. Likewise, within the many daily tasks and challenges, find time to overcome, knowledge has always been an essential weapon, and even more so in the present.

If the current challenges and difficulties are great, greater is the work of the Revolution, which constitutes its best and irrefutable defense against the infamies of the enemy, a palpable work in any corner of Cuba in the material and spiritual order.

The Revolution dignified Cuba and Cubans. The very concept of power took on a new dimension when politics ceased to be the fiefdom of an elite and all the people became the protagonists of their destiny. That is why we have to defend and carry forward this Revolution of the humble, by the humble and for the humble.

History has taught us where resignation and defeatism lead to. Let us not limit ourselves to resist. Let us get out of these difficulties, as we have always done, by fighting! (Applause), with the same determination of Baraguá, of Moncada, of Granma, of Girón and with the firm convictions instilled in us by the Commander in Chief.

This translates today into working harder and, above all, doing it well. This is our commitment to the glorious history of the homeland and the best tribute to the fallen.

As the Prime Minister, comrade Manuel Marrero, explained in a clear way just a few days ago in the National Assembly of People's Power, in the complex and unpostponable economic battle it is imperative to advance in productivity, order and efficiency, even if it implies some sacrifices to create the conditions that will allow us to get out of the current situation and develop.

Finding an answer to these difficulties is an unavoidable duty of all Cuban revolutionaries. On such a significant date, I ask our people to join consciously and responsibly, as we are accustomed to, in this endeavor that the homeland demands today.

Continued on back cover

Solidarity with Cuba as a strategic axis in Fidel Castro's thinking...

A Vision from Canada

By Tamara Hansen

Tamara Hansen, a member of the Fire This Time Editorial Board, was invited to speak at the 14th International Congress of Higher Education "Universidad 2024" on February 6, 2024 with the opening panel: "Solidarity with Cuba as a strategic axis in Fidel Castro's thinking. Vision from Canada and the U.S.A." This was led by Dr. Rafael E. Cervantes Martinez, as part of the II International Workshop "Social and Humanistic Sciences from the universities". Below is her speech.

My name is Tamara Hansen, and I am the coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC); author of the book, "5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution: The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership" (Battle of Ideas Press, 2010); and an organizer with the U.S.-Cuba Normalization Conference Coalition. I am also on the Editorial Board of the Fire This Time Newspaper. I have travelled to Cuba 15 times since my first trip in 2005. I am also a high school teacher and passionate about education.

All of my Cuba solidarity work is volunteer work, which I am very passionate about. I stand beside Cuba in its fight against injustice, and also to highlight the important example and leadership role that the Cuban revolution is for the world.

Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba or VCSC formed in 2004 after the first "Plan Bush" when U.S. President George W Bush tightened the inhuman blockade on Cuba. Since 2004, we have been involved in many campaigns for Cuba – primarily against cruel U.S. blockade on Cuba and for ten years we worked towards the triumphant campaign to free our 5 Cuban heroes held in U.S. jails. We are a member organization of the cross-Canada umbrella coalition, the Canadian Network on Cuba. We will be celebrating 20 years of our organization this spring!

I want to thank the organizers of the "Universidad 2024" for inviting and encouraging me to speak to you today about "Solidarity with Cuba as a strategic axis in Fidel Castro's thinking. Vision from Canada." I am sorry I could not be there in person with you all in beautiful Havana.

Comandante Fidel & Solidarity

In 1979 Comandante Fidel Castro declared at a meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, "In

International Relations we practice our solidarity with actions, not with beautiful words." The Cuba solidarity movement in Canada and around the world, in general, does not represent a state, or have control of a department of foreign relations. We believe in the importance of people-to-people foreign relations and friendship. That our work must be concrete, organized, cooperative, and creative. We have also learned from Comandante Fidel that our solidarity is shown in actions and work, not just words.

An important contribution, among the many contributions, of Comandante Fidel Castro to the Cuban people and the world is his concept of the battle of ideas. The reminds us that both our words and actions must be focused on a target. For us in Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba, the focus is to educate and inspire working and oppressed people in Canada about the important gains of the Cuban revolution. About how a country like Cuba has been able to build a society where human beings come first, not profits and greed. About how Cuba's concept of revolutionary internationalism has brought Cuban doctors and medical professionals to work all over the globe at the service of working and oppressed people.

This work invites people in Canada to support Cuba, but also has the target of convincing working and oppressed people in Canada that we too need to make revolutionary changes within this capitalist country of Canada.

How does solidarity with Cuba represent a strategic axis in Fidel Castro's thinking?

Cuba's founding of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) as well as the expansion of Cuban diplomatic missions

all over the world have shown how Cuba is committed to reaching out to the world and building solidarity amongst working and oppressed people. These connections and leadership are all a part of Comandante Fidel Castro's vision of the importance of solidarity.

On the other side of the battle of ideas, cynical U.S. imperialism likes to call this 'propaganda', but they are envious of the way the world loves the revolutionary people and government of Cuba. Cuba, which has offered education, health and hope to the world stands proud; while U.S. imperialism offers only environmental degradation, exploitation of human beings, profits for a select few, and war.



In a CIA report titled "Cuba: Castro's Propaganda Apparatus and Foreign Policy" written in 1983, you can hear how jealous the CIA is of Cuba's relationship with the world due to Fidel and the Cuban revolution's commitment to international solidarity. The CIA report reads, "The Cuban Institute for Friendship Among Peoples (ICAP) is designed to organize in foreign countries

associations that are responsive to direction from Havana. There are now 113 such associations throughout the world. The Castro regime constructed a \$25 million Palace of Conventions in Havana to host international gatherings designed to focus world opinion on specific issues or to promote Cuban prestige." The report goes on to say, "[Castro] has been able to project such a favorable image of Cuba that Third World leaders see it as a model for other developing countries. Despite relentless meddling abroad, he has been able to convince many influential individuals that he is willing to abide by correct standards of international behavior."

Solidarity from Vancouver

There is no struggle going on today, in which we organize, educate, and mobilize that does not fit within the context of the Battle of Ideas. Every struggle and all struggles ultimately leads to the Battle Ideas.

In our Cuba solidarity work this means confronting the lies that are spread about Cuba.

This also means campaigning to end the cruel and unjust over 60-year US blockade on Cuba. Including pushing the for US Government to immediately remove Cuba for their so-called state sponsors of terrorism list.

We have been working on webinars, forums, film showings, conferences, info tabling, poetry and art events, protests, caravans, pickets, and many other actions to bring in new people to



Solidarity Tabling by Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba

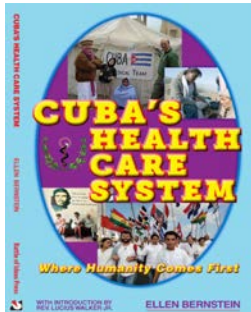
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CUBA'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM WHERE HUMANITY COMES FIRST

BY ELLEN BERNSTEIN

"The unfailing dedication of Cuban health care professionals has led to dramatic improvements in quality of life, for millions of people who previously had no other hope of receiving decent medical care. IFCO/Pastors for Peace is pleased to honor the diligent health care professionals of the Cuban health care system. We especially pay tribute to Cuba's national leadership, whose vision of universal health care as a right of every citizen sets an example for the world."

Ellen Bernstein has served as Associate Director of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) since 2003. She has been a key staff member of IFCO's project Pastors for Peace, and has been deeply and integrally involved in IFCO's historic work with Cuba.

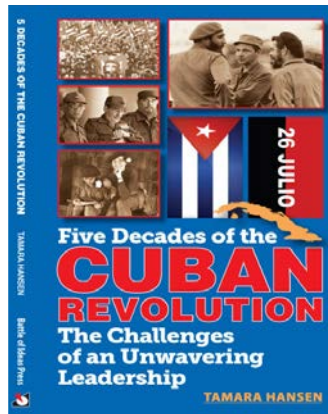


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WWW.BATTLEOFIDEASPRESS.COM
INFO@BATTLEOFIDEASPRESS.COM

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5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership



By Tamara Hansen

Coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). She is also an editorial board member of The Fire This Time newspaper. She has travelled to Cuba over a dozen times and has written extensively on Cuban politics since 2003.

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I reiterate a conviction that I expressed in the Cuban Parliament on August 1, 2010: "We, Cuban revolutionaries, difficulties do not keep us awake at night, our only path is to continue the struggle with optimism and unshakable faith in victory" (Applause).

In this supreme endeavor, the Revolutionary Armed Forces and the Ministry of the Interior, faithful and sure guardians of the Revolution, will participate decisively. If yesterday from the victorious arms of the Rebel Army emerged free, beautiful, powerful and invincible the new homeland, today I can affirm that in the face of any threat or weakness its combatants will not renounce to continue being, together with the Party, the soul of the Revolution (Applause).

Dear compatriots:

As the Commander-in-Chief stated in his message upon the formation of the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution, thirty years ago: "... There are no generational contradictions in the Revolution for one simple reason: because there is no envy or craving for power among its sons.

"None of us old fighters cling to positions nor do we consider ourselves creditors of the homeland for having rendered it a service, and as long as we have strength left we will be in the post assigned to us, however modest it may be." So much for Fidel's words, which seem to have been spoken today.

On this date of such significance I can affirm that our greatest pride and satisfaction is to have been with Fidel in every moment of joy, indignation or sadness; to have learned from him the decisive importance of unity; not to lose serenity and confidence in triumph no matter how insurmountable the powerful obstacles of the enemies or how great the dangers may seem; to learn and draw strength from every setback until transforming it into victory.

Faithful to his teachings and his example, here we are, and from the heroic Santiago de Cuba we ratify that we remain with our foot in the stirrup and ready to charge with the machete, together with the people and as one more combatant (Applause), against the enemy and our own mistakes, certain that the Mambi cry will always resound in this land:

Viva Cuba libre! (Exclamations of: "Viva!")

(Ovation)

Source: Cubadebate, unofficial translation by Resumen Latinoamericano – English
From: <https://resumen-english.org>

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the Cuba solidarity movement.

One of our other main objectives to get people in Canada to Cuba to see the Cuban reality for themselves. We do this with promoting Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade (a project of the CNC), the Calixto Garcia Brigade (a new project in Canada), the IFCO/Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba, as well as others.

In Vancouver we have monthly car caravans for Cuba in solidarity with "Puentes de Amor" on the last Sunday of every month. We take to the streets to let people know about why they must oppose the unjust blockade on Cuba.

We are working with the U.S. -Cuba Normalization Conference Coalition to bring more information about Cuba to the "belly of the beast" in the United States. We will be organizing a conference in New York City in March 2024 with a delegation of Cuban women from the FMC.

We have a postcard campaign to demand President Biden remove Cuba from the so-called State Sponsors of Terrorism list. This campaign, which began as a collaboration of Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade – Vancouver and the NY-NJ Cuba Si Coalition is now also endorsed by IFCO/Pastors for Peace, Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba, Seattle/Cuba Friendship Committee and the European Campaign Unblock Cuba. Thousands of postcards have been shipped to friends of Cuba across the United States and Canada - and have been sent on to the White House.

Conclusion

To summarize I want to go back to the words of Commander Fidel Castro at the closing of the 1994 World Solidarity Meeting with Cuba, where he said: "For us, solidarity and internationalism is a principle, and a sacred principle." Our work in solidarity continues because Cuba inspires us. In the face of many difficulties, Cuba continues down the challenging, but necessary path of holding up the torch of revolution internationalism, socialism, and a better world. We must stand with Cuba and encourage others to joins us. This is the power of solidarity: unity, unity, unity! That is why Fidel called it our sacred principle.

Thank you so much!
¡Viva Cuba!
¡Viva Fidel!
¡Viva la educación!
¡Viva la revolución!