
Fidel, his presence

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Havana woke up with an unusual silence. As Cuba did. The news was released late at night. A lot of people knew about it the next morning. To some, it was difficult to assume that the man, who had been presence and guide for so many years, had passed away. Few days before, some pictures of him welcoming a foreign leader were released. And he was as usual, smiling. People got used to not knowing about him for days (it was Fidel's decision to step back from public life, his appearances were already limited and he did not write his columns on the newspaper). But he was there and people keep talking about him.

Few months earlier, at the closing of the 7th Congress of the Cuba's Communist Party, he delivered a powerful speech that moved everyone: "Soon, I'll be turning 90 years old. It's something I'd never imagined would happen. It wasn't the fruit of any labor, but rather a whim of destiny. Soon I'll be like all the others; to all of us, our time must come. But the ideas of the Cuban communists will live on as proof that on this planet, working with fervor and dignity, can produce the material and cultural wealth that humans need, and we must fight relentlessly to obtain these. To our brothers in Latin America and the world we must convey that the Cuban people will overcome."

It looked like a political testament. He concluded by saying: "This may be one of the last times that I speak in this room. (...) We will set forth on the march forward and we will perfect what we should perfect, with the utmost loyalty and united force, just as Martí, Maceo and Gómez, in an unstoppable march."

And they were, in fact, his parting words. But there were no regrets or sorrow in his speech. It was a call. Not only to those in attendance at the Havana's Convention Palace. It was a call to the nation.

He never stopped dreaming about a better world. And he never stopped fighting for such a world. Even his enemies acknowledged his will, determination. As if he knew life is too short to overcome every obstacle it has. As if he would always be committed to the continuity of an idea, a project.

He said goodbye without drama, trusting that future depends on men and urging his fellow countrymen to never lose hope. He, like (José) Martí, always trusted in the moral shield of his people.

He passed away on November 25th, 2016. And contrary to what his enemies believed, the news was immediately released. The country stopped. And not for any decree. It was not imposed by anyone. It was something natural. People felt it. Millions —here and abroad— lost their guide: the pain was natural. Many, who did not share his view, were very respectful. The multitude that accompanied him in his final journey to the Santa Ifigenia Cemetery, did it out of love, gratefulness, and admiration. The tears, the usually repeated phrase “I am Fidel,” were the rightful expression of the national feeling.

On November 25th, 2016 the man died and the symbol was born. Fidel Castro Ruz reached the eternity. He is and will be always present.

Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz / CubaSí Translation Staff
