

Fidel, a Man of Peace

By Jorge Lezcano Pérez*

The universality of Fidel's humanist ideas is recognized in every corner of the world, and he is known to be, above all, a man of peace. Naturally, in the process of historical development of humankind and of the peoples' eternal struggle to obtain their full freedom, independence, sovereignty, dignity, and happiness, our Commander in Chief also stands out for his exemplarity as military strategist, statesman, ruler, politician, and educator, among other capacities.

These reasons lead us to clarify that the present lines are solely dedicated to present some key moments of his dimension as untiring peace fighter.

(...) peace is the secret desire of men's hearts and their natural condition.¹ Based on that thought of Martí and on his ethics, Fidel, from an early stage assumed concepts that remained present in the struggles he later waged in defense of peace, which turned him into an unequalled human being who is present in the struggle being carried out by Cubans and each revolutionary in the world to attain a better world.

By becoming, first a utopian communist and later a Marxist-Leninist – as disclosed in an interview with Ignacio Ramonet – he considerably enriched his political ideas, which timely granted him a better understanding of the obstacles he would have to overcome on the road to peace.

Having embraced the illuminated ideas of Marxism-Leninism, and always keeping in mind the teachings of José Martí, he delved deeply into the causes that generated the injustice, hunger, poverty, inequality, violence and exploitation endured by the Cuban people. And for that reason Fidel dreamed, like politicians should.² The Moncada, the Granma, and the Sierra Maestra epics, together with the people's support made his dreams come true.

On January 1, 1959 Cuba became free, independent, sovereign, and from that moment on it would have to struggle to cease being a country of illiterates deprived of culture and health for all. To do that it would have to attain economic development and social equality, a goal that Fidel knew could only be achieved in a context of peace, of civil tranquility, and with the participation of everyone; with the aggravating element of having to face the most powerful empire in history, which would require preparing for war as sole way of preventing it.

With this Cuban reality, our Commander in Chief succeeded in developing a political thought in which peace is inseparably linked with development and with social justice as inalienable principle, valid not just for our nation but for any place in the world where people struggle to build their own destiny.

His first trip abroad after the triumph of the Revolution was to Venezuela, in late January 1959. There he visited the Parliament of Caracas, and on that occasion he thanked the

Venezuelan people for the support it had given to Cuba's struggle for independence. He further explained the experiences of our country in defense of peace: "(...) For example, in Cuba today we have experiences of how there is peace, there is order. Because they speak of peace and order; well, in Cuba there was never more peace and more order than there is today, without police and without force, because it is the peace that the people want and maintain, and it is the order that the people need and maintain."³ This was perhaps the first time that the historical leader of the Cuban Revolution spoke outside his country about such a sensitive and important theme as peace.

However, it was at the scenario of the United Nations Organization on September 26, 1960, during his historical address on behalf of Cuba, where Fidel disclosed key elements of his standpoint regarding peace and the policy of the Cuban Revolution against war and the arms race.

"(...) Abolish the philosophy of plunder and the philosophy of war will disappear! (...) War is a business. Those who make war a business, those who become rich with war have to be unmasked: it is necessary to open the world's eyes and show the world the ones that make business with the fate of humankind. (...) Let us struggle for peace and let us struggle for disarmament."⁵

From that moment on Fidel used all the tribunes that would allow him to struggle for peace, and explain new ideas and concepts to enlighten the revolutionaries and popular masses on the need to struggle for peace for all citizens. He, who had become a had intensely studied the revolutionary processes taking place in the world, and who was winning one battle after another against the fierce imperialism persisting in defeating the Revolution, achieved the understanding that peace was not only defended with firmness, decision and courage, but also with intelligence.

As expression of the link among peace, sovereignty and the people's political struggle, on January 15, 1963 he stated: "(...) We want peace with rights, with sovereignty, and with dignity! We want peace without renouncing the revolutionary condition, without renouncing the Revolution!"⁵

Broaching the theme again on May 1, 1965 at Plaza de la Revolución José Martí, he said: "(...) No one wishes or may wish war; people want peace, to live in peace, work in peace, grow in peace, develop in peace; the people want to build their happiness, but that happiness has to be conquered intelligently."⁶

Conscious of the value of ideas as main weapon in the struggle against history's most warmonger empire, which constantly puts the world on the border of a nuclear war, he reiterated the need to sow ideas and conscience among the people, which he did with passion and intelligence.

Also knowing that the struggle for peace had to face the powerful propaganda and disinformation machinery employed by the large transnational communications

corporations to poison the minds of the citizens throughout the world, he participated directly in many world forums where that battle was waged.

At the UN, the Non-Aligned, the Group of 77, the Iberian-American Summits, the CELAC, CARICOM, ALBA-TCP and the World Peace Council, among other forums, his voice was always unifying, defender of the just causes of the world's dispossessed, inspiring guide to channel the peoples' will in their efforts to attain and enjoy peace with dignity and for all.

From the many moments in which his political genius shone in defense of peace we will quote only four: the UN, the Summit of Non-Aligned Countries, the Ministerial Meeting of the Group of 77, and the Iberian American Summit.

United Nations Organization (UN)

- “(...) Let us say farewell to arms and let us focus in a civilized way to the most stressing problems of our era.”⁷
- “(...) It is not possible to speak about peace on behalf of the tens of millions of human beings who die every year of hunger or curable illnesses throughout the world. It is not possible to speak about peace on behalf of 900 million illiterates.”⁸
- “(...) We have come to speak about peace and collaboration among the peoples, and we have come to warn that if we do not solve the present injustices and inequalities in peace and with wisdom, the future will be apocalyptic.”⁹

Summit of the Movement of Non-aligned Countries

- “(...) Without peace – we are all sure of it – development is not possible, in the same way that without development, peace would not be possible.”¹⁰
- “(...) There cannot be development if there is no peace, nor can there be peace if there is no development for the huge majority of the peoples of the Earth.”¹¹

Group of 77

- “(...) Peace and the right to a comfortable and worthy life should exist for everyone.”¹²
- It is an axiom that without peace there will be no development, but it is also an axiom that there cannot be peace without development for eight tenths of the world population.¹³

Iberian-American Summit

- “(...) Peace requires many things: patience, wisdom, hope, social justice, to acquire all the strength required to achieve it.”¹⁴

One of Fidel's many contributions in his unceasing struggle to make peace prevail as right and enjoyment for all, is to have conceived this battle without making concessions of principles, without the people having to renounce their dreams of social justice, without abandoning their principles, which is perceived in the following ideas:

- “(...) the defense of peace cannot be a passive defense; the preaching in favor of peace cannot be a beatific preaching; peace at any price: no!”¹⁴
- “(...) peace is not obtained with weakness; peace is obtained with firmness, courage and the peoples' decision.”¹⁵
- “A peace with respect, a peace with rights, a peace with independence, and a peace with safety for all peoples of the world: that is the peace we must all fight for!”¹⁶

Nothing escaped Fidel's vision of the comprehensive approach that must exist to combat all attitudes that endanger the efforts to enable all human beings and world nations to live in peace. He knew that the war would be followed by one of the most terrible and deadly plagues: terrorism, and for that reason he warned:

“(...) We are and will be against terrorism and against war! Nothing will make us stray from that line!¹⁷ (...) Search for peace everywhere to protect all peoples against that plague of terrorism.¹⁸

When reflecting on the legacy of Fidel, who left us a vast and strategic arsenal of ideas to continue his struggle to conquer peace for all human beings in our planet, we must underline its full applicability even in the complex and dangerous situations in which the imperial oligarchies have placed the world, with the consciousness that there will be peace for all or no peace for anyone, and also conscious, like Fidel himself said at a meeting of the World Peace Council:

“(...) peace by itself is not the solution to all problems. Peace is only the primary condition to be able to apply consequently the huge volumes of energy and resources required to enable all humankind and not just a part of it to live in an honorable, decent and decorous way.”¹⁹

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Notes

¹Valdés Galarraga, Ramiro. Diccionario del pensamiento martiano. Ciencias Sociales Publishing House, Havana, 2007, p. 508.

²Cien horas con Fidel. Conversaciones con Ignacio Ramonet, Tercera Edición, Publications Office of the Council of State, Havana, 2006, p. 140.

³Susi Sarfati, Salomón. Diccionario de Pensamientos de Fidel Castro. Second revised edition. Editora Política, Havana, 2016, p. 319.

⁴ Address by Commander Fidel Castro Ruz, Prime Minister of the Revolutionary Government, at the Parliament of Caracas, Venezuela, on January 24, 1959. Stenographic version of the Prime Minister's Offices.

⁵ La Revolución cubana 1953-1980. Selection of Readings 2. Félix Varela Publishing House, Havana, 2002, pp. 150, 157, 158.

⁶Susi Sarfati, Salomón. Diccionario de Pensamientos de Fidel Castro. Second edition, revised and enlarged, Editora Política, Havana, 2016, p.304.

⁷Creach Corrales, Pedro. Fidel Castro Ruz. Pensamientos. Thematic selection. Enlarged edition. La Gráfica en la Comunidad, abril de 2017, p.188.

⁸ Ibídem.

⁹ Ibídem.

¹⁰ Ibídem, p. 189.

¹¹ Ibídem.

¹² Susi Sarfati, Salomón. Diccionario de Pensamientos de Fidel Castro. Second edition, revised and enlarged, Editora Política, Havana, 2016, p. 306.

¹³ Creach Corrales, Pedro. Fidel Castro Ruz. Pensamientos. Thematic selection. Enlarged edition. La Gráfica en la Comunidad, April, 2017, p.189.

¹⁴ Ibídem.

¹⁵ Susi Sarfati, Salomón. Diccionario de Pensamientos de Fidel Castro. Second edition, revised and enlarged, Editora Política, La Habana, 2016, p. 306.

¹⁶ Susi Sarfati, Salomón. Diccionario de Pensamientos de Fidel Castro. Second edition, revised and enlarged, Editora Política, Havana, 2016, p. 304.

¹⁷ Ibídem, p.306.

¹⁸ Creach Corrales, Pedro. Fidel Castro Ruz. Pensamientos. Thematic selection. Enlarged edition.. La Gráfica en la Comunidad, April, 2017, p.190.

¹⁹Ibídem.

²⁰ Ibídem.

²¹Susi Sarfati, Salomón. Diccionario de Pensamientos de Fidel Castro. Second edition, revised and enlarged, Editora Política, Havana, 2016, p. 305.