



## All India Peace & Solidarity Organisation (AIPSO)

West Bengal State Committee

Please visit: [www.aipsowb.org](http://www.aipsowb.org)



### FIDEL CASTRO: 90 YEARS

**13 August 1926:** Fidel Castro Ruz born in eastern Cuban hamlet of Biran, Oriente Province.

**6 November 1940:** A letter in English written by the 14-year-old Castro from Santiago to US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, expressing his joy at Roosevelt's re-election.

In 1945, began studying law at the University of Havana. He took an interest in student activism while studying law and was attracted to Left, anti-imperialist politics and joined the rebellions against right-wing governments in Dominican Republic and Colombia, apart from protesting the dictatorial rule in his own country. Though he was aware of the writings of Marx and Lenin, having read them, it was Marti who had a tremendous influence on him. In 1947, Castro joined the Cuban People's Party led by Eduardo Chibas. In 1952, he became a candidate for Congress for the Cuban People's Party. The Cuban People's Party was expected to win the election; but during the campaign, General Fulgencio Batista captured power on 10 March 1952 with the support of the military.

**26 July 1953:** Some 160 men under the command of Fidel Castro attacked the Moncada army garrison in Santiago de Cuba, Cuba's second-largest city. Though this attack failed and many of the participants, including Fidel were captured, it marked a significant turning point in the history of Cuban revolution.

**16 October 1953:** Castro is sentenced to fifteen years, making famous 'history will absolve me' speech from the dock.

**15 May 1955 -** Fidel is released from the jail as part of a general amnesty for political prisoners. Went into exile in Mexico. While in Mexico, he met Argentine physician Che Guevara. They organized a group of Cuban exiles into a new guerrilla group.

**2 December 1956:** Eighty-two exiles land in Cuba, on a yacht named Granma. Most are killed immediately. The survivors, including Guevara and the Fidel and Raul Castro, flee to the Sierra Maestra Mountains. Between 1957-1958, they wage a guerilla campaign from this base.

**28 December 1958:** Fall of Santa Clara, after rebel attack led by Che Guevara. Batista troops end military resistance.

**1 January 1959:** Dictator Fulgencio Batista, his family, and 180 of his associates flee to Dominican Republic as the rebels take power.

**2 January 1959:** Manuel Urrutia named the new president.

**8 January 1959:** Castro enters Havana following triumphant procession through island from east of Cuba.

**23 January 1959:** Castro visited Venezuela to thank its people and the government which assumed power after the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship, for the dispatch of 150 rifles at the end of 1958.

**16 February 1959:** Castro is sworn in as Prime Minister of Cuba.

**3 March 1959:** Cuban government expropriates properties belonging to the International Telephone and Telegraph Company, and takes over its affiliate, the Cuban Telephone Company, lowering telephone rates.

**15- 26 April 1959:** Fidel Castro and a delegation of representatives visited the U.S. as guests of the Press Club. During his visit Castro met the then US Vice-President Richard Nixon.

**17 May 1959:** Castro signs the Agrarian Reform Act. The government expropriates farm lands over 1,000 acres and bans land ownership by foreigners. Two hundred thousand peasants receive titles to land.

**18 July 1959:** Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado sworn in as new Cuban President. Served till 2 December 1976.

**4 September 1959:** US Ambassador Bonsal met with Cuban Premier Fidel Castro to express “serious concern at the treatment being given to American private interests in Cuba both agriculture and utilities.”

**15 October 1959:** Raúl Castro is named Minister of Defense.

**8 May 1960:** Cuba and the Soviet Union establish formal diplomatic relations.



**17 September 1960:** Cuba nationalizes all U.S. banks, including First National City Bank of New York, First National Bank of Boston and Chase Manhattan Bank.

**26 September 1960:** Castro's speech in the UN General Assembly for over four hours. Castro lambasted U.S. policy toward Cuba and other nations in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. The United States, he declared, had "decreed the destruction" of his revolutionary government. He said: "Were Kennedy not a millionaire, illiterate and ignorant, then he would obviously understand that you cannot revolt against the peasants."

**29 September 1960:** Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Prime Minister Fidel Castro met at Theresa Hotel – located in black Harlem, New York. Both were present in New York to attend the United Nations General Assembly sessions.

**13 October 1960:** Rents are cut in half as Cuba's Urban Reform Act takes effect.

**19 October 1960:** The United States embargo against Cuba (in Cuba called el bloqueo, "the blockade") is a commercial, economic, and financial embargo imposed by the United States on Cuba. An embargo was first imposed by the United States on Cuba on 19 October 1960 (almost two years after the Batista regime was deposed by the Cuban Revolution) when the US placed an embargo on exports to Cuba except for food and medicine after Cuba nationalized American-owned Cuban oil refineries without compensation. On 7 February 1962 the embargo was extended to include almost all imports. Currently, the Cuban embargo is enforced mainly through six statutes: the Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917, the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, the Cuban Assets Control Regulations of 1963, the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992, the Helms–Burton Act of 1996, and the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000. The stated purpose of the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 is to maintain sanctions on Cuba so long as the Cuban government refuses to move toward "democratization and greater respect for human rights". The Helms–Burton Act further restricted United States citizens from doing business in or with Cuba, and mandated restrictions on giving public or private assistance to any successor government in Havana unless and until certain claims against the Cuban government were met. In 1999, President Bill Clinton expanded the trade embargo by also disallowing foreign subsidiaries of U.S. companies to trade with Cuba. In 2000, Bill Clinton authorized the sale of "humanitarian" U.S. products to Cuba.

The UN General Assembly has, since 1992, passed a resolution every year condemning the ongoing impact of the embargo and declaring it to be in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Human rights groups including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights have also been critical of the embargo.

**24 October 1960:** Cuban government seizes more American-owned properties.

**November 1960:** Popular Socialist Party led by Blas Roca joined the International Meeting of Communist and Workers Parties held in Moscow and joined by 81 parties. On 5 December, 1960, these Parties unanimously adopted a Statement.

**1 January 1961:** The year-long Cuban National Literacy Campaign launched to abolish illiteracy in Cuba. The year 1961 was declared as ‘Year of Education’.

**3 January 1961:** Washington breaks off diplomatic relations with Cuba.

**16 April 1961:** Castro declares his revolution socialist

**19 April 1961:** Castro directs troops in defeat of invasion attempt by US-backed Cuban exiles at Bay of Pigs.

**1 May 1961:** May Day Celebration by Castro in Havana, Cuba is a Socialist Nation.

**6 June 1961:** Nationalization of education in Cuba.

**26 July 1961:** The ‘Integrated Revolutionary Organizations’ (ORI) was formed from the merger of Fidel Castro’s 26th of July Movement, the Popular Socialist Party led by Blas Roca and the student-based Revolutionary Directory led by Faure Chomón.

**30 October 1961:** Nationalization of all banks and 383 big industrial units.

**21 January 1962:** Despite being a founding member of the Organization of American States (OAS), Cuba was effectively suspended from 21 January 1962 to 3 June 2009. Thus, for almost the entire time that the OAS has been operating, Cuba has been barred from sending representatives to the OAS and effectively had its membership suspended. It was not until 3 June 2009 that foreign ministers of OAS member countries assembled for the OAS's 39th General Assembly in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, passed a vote to lift Cuba's suspension from the OAS.

**8 February 1962:** US President John F. Kennedy extended measures by Executive Order, first widening the scope of the trade restrictions (announced on February 3 and again on March 23, 1962). These measures expanded the embargo to include all imports of products containing Cuban goods, even if the final products had been made or assembled outside Cuba.

**26 March 1962:** The ‘Integrated Revolutionary Organizations’ (ORI) became the United Party of the Cuban Socialist Revolution (PURSC).

**3 August 1962:** US government amended the Foreign Assistance Act to prohibit aid to any country that provides assistance to Cuba.

**7 September 1962:** US President Kennedy formally expanded the Cuban embargo to include all Cuban trade, except for non-subsidized sale of food and medicines.

**14–28 October 1962:** The Cuban Missile Crisis was a 13-day (October 14–28, 1962) confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union over Soviet ballistic missiles deployed in Cuba.

**3 October 1963:** Second Agrarian Reform Law came into effect in Cuba.

**1 October 1965:** Communist Party of Cuba founded. Fidel Castro elected First Secretary.

**3 January 1966:** The Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America (OSPAAAL) founded in Havana.

**9 October 1967:** Che Guevara killed in Bolivia

**12 September 1973:** Fidel Castro visits New Delhi.

**15-16 September 1973:** Fidel Castro and a delegation of Cuban politicians made their way to the liberated land of Quang Tri in southern Viet Nam.

**17 September 1973:** Fidel Castro's flight from Hanoi (Vietnam) halted for one and a half hours at the Calcutta International Airport in Dum Dum. He was in Hanoi when the news of Chilean President Salvador Allende's assassination (11 September 1973) reached him. Castro cut short his stay in Vietnam immediately and headed straight back for Cuba. None of the Union Ministers was present at the Dum Dum airport to receive Castro as it was an unofficial visit. State Cabinet Minister Tarun Kanti Ghosh who welcomed Castro on the State government's behalf. Left leaders of the State, including CPI (M) leaders, Jyoti Basu and Promod Dasgupta, CPI leader Gopal Banerjee, All India Forward Bloc leader Ashok Ghosh, RSP leader Makhan Pal, Workers' Party leader Jyoti Bhattacharya were present at the airport to welcome Fidel Castro.



## **REPORTAGE ON CUBAN PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO INDIA**

### **Castro in Calcutta**

Delhi General Overseas Service in English 1000 GMT 17 Sep 73

The Cuban Prime Minister, Dr. Fidel Castro, has said that the imperialists have overthrown the democratic government of Chile. He said he was sure that this will be a temporary setback, but the Chilean people and workers will fight back the fascist regime. Dr Castro was addressing a gathering which had collected at the Calcutta airport this morning when his plane arrived there.

### **Calcutta Airport Address**

Bombay PTI in English 1245 GMT 17 Sep 73

[Text] Calcutta Sep 17 (PTI)--The Cuban prime minister, Dr. Fidel Castro, today said that despite the temporary setback in Chile, the liberation movement in Latin America would continue until the imperialists were completely defeated.

Dr Castro was addressing a large gathering of cheering people from the first floor of the Calcutta International Airport during his brief stopover from Hanoi on his way back home.

He told the crowd: "You know the action of the imperialists had led to the overthrow of the democratic government of President Allende of Chile. It will, however, have only a temporary setback. WE are sure the people, the workers, youths and students of Chile will continue to resist the fascists.

In Latin America, the liberation movement will make progress and the victory will be of the people," Dr. Castro said.

The Russian plane carrying the Cuban Prime Minister and his party touched down about 50 minutes behind schedule. As the tall, bearded Cuban prime minister in a jungle green uniform came out of the aircraft, a large crowd which had assembled at the airport greeted him with shouts of "Viva Castro."

He was received by the West Bengal Commerce Minister, Mr. Tarun Kanti Ghosh, and an ADC of the state governor.

Referring to his visit to Hanoi, Dr. Castro said he had also visited some of the "liberated zones" of South Vietnam. He had seen the most heroic people that ever existed in the world. They had been waging a hard struggle against one of the most powerful countries.

Expressing his regret that his stay in Calcutta was very short because of the long return journey to his country, the Cuban prime minister said he had noticed how much poverty and misery the imperialists had left in this country. India, he said, had a thousand year old culture, much older than that of Europe. But Europe today was a rich continent and its wealth was accumulated over the sweat and blood of the exploited colonial people.

Dr Castro said the people of colonial countries were not allowed to develop by the imperialists. Therefore, they must now begin this hard and long journey; towards industrialization with due sacrifice. Injustice and exploitation could not last forever. They would disappear from the face of the earth one day, he said. He thanked the people of India for their warm hospitality and concluded his short speech with the slogan "Workers of the World Unite" and "Long Live India."

The Cuban prime minister and his party left for Delhi on their way home after about a 1 and a half hour halt at Dum Dum.

[<http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1973/19730917.html>]

**9–13 June 1975:** A conference of the Communist parties of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean took place in Havana. Representatives were sent by the Communist parties of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guadeloupe, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Martinique, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Observers were sent by the Communist parties of Canada and the USA.

**17–22 December 1975:** First Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba. Castro elected First Secretary.

**15 February 1976:** Referendum on the new constitution of Cuba. The new constitution got overwhelming approval and came into effect on 24 February 1976.

**3 December 1976:** Fidel Castro elected President of Cuba.

**1978:** The 11th World Festival of Youth and Students held in Havana, Cuba. Participants: 18,500 from 145 countries. Slogan: "For anti-imperialist Solidarity, Peace and Friendship"

**17 July 1979:** In Nicaragua, President Somoza resigned and the FSLN entered Managua, giving full control of the government to the revolutionary movements. On 19 July, 1979, the Sandinistas took power in Nicaragua.

**3–9 September 1979:** Sixth NAM Summit held in Havana, Cuba. Cuba elected Chairman of the NAM. Cuba is one of the founding members of the NAM.

**17–20 December 1980:** Second Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba. Castro re-elected first Secretary.

**19 April 1982:** President Ronald Reagan reinstates the ban on US travel to Cuba.

**7-12 March 1983:** Castro visits New Delhi to attend the Seventh NAM Summit. Fidel handed over the NAM chairmanship to embracing Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. From 1979 to 1983, Cuba was the NAM chairman.

**August 1985:** Prime Minister of India Rajiv Gandhi met Fidel Castro while on a two-day visit to Havana. The Order of Jose Marti was posthumously awarded to Indira Gandhi during this visit.

**4-7 February 1986:** Third Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba. Castro reelected first Secretary.

**2 January 1989:** “Socialism or Death”, says President Castro in his speech on the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Cuban Revolution.

**2-5 April 1989:** Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev’s visit to Cuba.

**25-27 July 1991:** Nelson Mandela’s three-day visit to Cuba as President Castro’s guest. On 26 July, Mandela attended a massive rally to celebrate the Attack on the Moncada Barracks. Mandela was the first speaker to address them, followed by Castro. It may be noted that the ANC established a diplomatic office in Havana in December 1978, and in 1994 it became the official South African embassy in Cuba.

**10-14 October 1991:** Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba. Castro reelected first Secretary.

**25 September - 3 October 1993:** West Bengal chief Minister, Jyoti Basu visits Cuba. Jyoti Basu’s meeting with President Castro on 2 October 1993. Castro went to the State Guest house to meet Basu. On 3 October, Castro took him to the airport in a farewell gesture.

**19 August 1994:** US President Bill Clinton announces an end to the “open door” policy on Cuban refugees, established by President Lyndon Johnson in 1966. Washington and Havana sign migration agreement to stem exodus and allow minimum of 20,000 legal entry visas per year for Cubans.

**21-25 November 1994:** The First World Meeting of Friendship and Solidarity with Cuba, held in Havana in 1994, was attended by 3069 delegates from 108 countries. Inaugurated by Fidel Castro.

**13 December 1994:** Hugo Chavez, then retired Venezuelan military officer met Fidel Castro in Havana.

**22-24 September 1995:** First Asia Pacific Regional Conference of Solidarity with Cuba held at Netaji Indoor Stadium, Kolkata (West Bengal, India). Inaugurated by Jyoti Basu. Organized by National Committee of Solidarity with Cuba and Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP)

**12 March 1996:** The Helms- Burton law - allowing the United States to penalise foreign companies investing in Cuba - is signed into law by President Clinton.

**28 July- 5 August 1997:** The 14th World Festival of Youth and Students held in Havana, Cuba. Participants: 12.325 from 136 countries. Slogan: “For anti-imperialist Solidarity, Peace and Friendship”

**8–10 October 1997:** Fifth Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba. Castro reelected first Secretary.

**21-25 January 1998:** Castro welcomes Pope John Paul II as the pontiff begins a historic five-day visit. This marks the first time a pope has ever visited Cuba.

**4-5 September 1998:** Castro’s visit to South Africa.

**12 September 1998:** Five Cuban heroes, Gerardo Hernandez, Ramón Labañino, Fernando Gonzalez, Antonio Guerrero and René Gonzalez were accused of the crime of conspiracy to commit espionage were arrested in Miami by FBI agents. Fernando González was released on 27 February 2014. The remaining members were released on 17 December 2014.

**10-14 November 2000:** Second ‘World Meeting of Friendship and Solidarity with Cuba’ held in Havana. It was attended by 4347 delegates from 118 countries who gathered to condemn the US blockade of Cuba. The largest delegation was the 600-strong US delegation, which defied their government's ban on travel to Cuba. Inaugurated by Fidel Castro.

**13 December 2000:** Russian President Vladimir Putin meets with Castro in Cuba. They discuss trade issues and the estimated \$20 million Cuban debt with Moscow.

**16 December 2001:** Shipments of corn and chicken arrive in Havana harbour, the first direct US food sales to Cuba in nearly 40 years.

**12 May 2002:** Former US President Jimmy Carter arrives in Cuba for a five-day visit to Cuba. Carter is first former or serving US president to visit Cuba since 1959 revolution.

**6 March 2003:** Castro is elected by parliament to sixth five-year term as president of Council of State – Cuba's governing body.

**Oct 2003:** US President George Bush announces some new measures against Cuba including tightening a travel embargo to the island, and a more robust information campaign aimed at Cuba. A new body, the 'Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba', is created.

**14 December 2004:** The Cuba-Venezuela agreement was signed by President Chavez and President Fidel Castro. The pact was aimed at the exchange of medical and educational resources and petroleum between both nations. Venezuela delivers about 96,000 barrels of oil per day from its state-owned petroleum operations to Cuba at very favorable prices and Cuba in exchange sent 20,000 state-employed medical staff and thousands of teachers to Venezuela's poorest states. The pact evolved into the 'Bolivarian Alternative for the People of Our Americas' (ALBA) as other Latin American and Caribbean nations join.

**25 August 2005:** Mission Miracle was founded in Venezuela on 25 August 2005, when the presidents of Cuba and Venezuela, Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez, signed the Sandino Commitment in Havana to provide eye surgeries to 6 million people, including Venezuelans and other Latin Americans, in just 10 years.

**30 December 2005:** Bolivian President-elect Evo Morales visits Cuba.

**26 July 2006:** A four-hour Revolution Day speech marks Castro's final personal appearance as president.

**31 July 2006:** Ailing President Fidel Castro transferred his official responsibilities to the Vice President Raul Castro.



**13 August 2006:** President Chavez met Fidel Castro in Havana.

**13 August 2006:** On his 80th birthday, ailing Castro released a statement: "I ask you all to be optimistic, and at the same time to be ready to face any adverse news... For all those who care about my health, I promise I'll fight for it."

**11-16 September 2006:** Fourteenth NAM Summit in Havana, Cuba. Attended by 118 countries. The chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was handed over to Cuba. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Havana to attend the Summit.

**28 March 2007:** The first of a series of essays called 'Reflections' written by Castro voicing his opinion on current issues.

**14 October 2007:** Ailing Fidel Castro called Chavez's radio show, making his first live appearance on Cuban airwaves since falling ill 14 months earlier.



**20 January 2008:** Castro re-elected to the National Assembly of People's Power of Cuba.

**19 February 2008:** Fidel announced that he would not stand for re-election as President at the next meeting of the National Assembly of People's Power.

**24 February 2008:** Raúl Castro elected President by the National Assembly of People's Power.

**13 April 2009:** US President Barack Obama eased the travel ban, now allowing Cuban-Americans to travel freely to Cuba.

**3 June 2009:** Foreign ministers of OAS member countries assembled for the OAS's 39th General Assembly in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, passed a vote to lift Cuba's suspension from the OAS.

**28 September 2010:** Fidel Castro delivers a speech during the commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Committees of Defense of the Revolution in Havana.

**9 November 2010:** The Draft Guidelines of the Economic and Social Policy of the Party and the Revolution released in Cuba, followed by a period of public discussions and consultations between 1 December 2010 to 28 February 2011.

**14 January 2011:** US President Barack Obama further eased the ban, by allowing students and religious missionaries to travel to Cuba if they meet certain restrictions.

**16-19 April 2011:** Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba. Fidel Castro attended the closing ceremony. Raul Castro elected first Secretary.

**29 April 2011:** World Peace Council awarded Fidel Castro the Olive of Peace award, for being an example in the struggle for world peace. The Olive of Peace is a wood sculpture in the shape of the globe topped by olive branches representing peace; it was created by Greek artist Kosta Rotos. Cuban Parliament President Ricardo Alarcón received the Olive of Peace given to Fidel during the first day of the meeting of the organization's Executive Committee in Havana. Fidel Castro was awarded Joliot-Curie gold medal by the World Peace Council in 1972 for his contribution to world peace.

**7 February 2012:** Fidel Castro writes an article titled 'The Genius of Chavez' published in the Cuba Debate.

**5 March 2013:** Chavez expires in Caracas.

**11 March 2013:** Castro describes Hugo Chavez, expired on 5 March 2013, as "the best friend the Cuban people have had in their history".

**17 December 2014:** U.S. President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raúl Castro announced the beginning of a process of normalizing relations between Cuba and the USA. The Obama administration formally removes Cuba from a U.S. terrorism blacklist.

**20 July 2015:** Diplomatic ties between Cuba and USA restored.

**14 August 2015:** The US embassy in Havana is opened with the attendance of US Secretary of State John Kerry, on an official visit to the island.

**21-22 March 2016:** US President Barack Obama's official visit to Cuba, the first visit in 88 years by a US president.

**27 March 2016:** Fidel Castro wrote an article, titled "Brother Obama" on US President's visit to Cuba. The full text is given below:

THE kings of Spain brought us the conquistadores and masters, whose footprints remained in the circular land grants assigned to those searching for gold in the sands of rivers, an abusive and shameful form of exploitation, traces of which can be noted from the air in many places around the country.

Tourism today, in large part, consists of viewing the delights of our landscapes and tasting exquisite delicacies from our seas, and is always shared with the private capital of large foreign corporations, whose earnings, if they don't reach billions of dollars, are not worthy of any attention whatsoever.

Since I find myself obliged to mention the issue, I must add - principally for the youth - that few people are aware of the importance of such a condition, in this singular moment of human history. I would not say that time has been lost, but I do not hesitate to affirm that we are not adequately informed, not you, nor us, of the knowledge and conscience that we must have to confront the realities which challenge us. The first to be taken into consideration is that our lives are but a fraction of a historical second, which must also be devoted in part to the vital necessities of every human being. One of the characteristics of this condition is the tendency to overvalue its role, in contrast, on the other hand, with the extraordinary number of persons who embody the loftiest dreams.

Nevertheless, no one is good or bad entirely on their own. None of us is designed for the role we must assume in a revolutionary society, although Cubans had the privilege of José Martí's example. I even ask myself if he needed to die or not in Dos Ríos, when he said, "For me, it's time," and charged the Spanish forces entrenched in a solid line of firepower. He did not want to return to the United States, and there was no one who could make him. Someone ripped some pages from his diary. Who bears this treacherous responsibility, undoubtedly the work of an unscrupulous conspirator? Differences between the leaders were well known, but never indiscipline. "Whoever attempts to appropriate Cuba will reap only the dust of its soil drenched in blood, if he does not perish in the struggle," stated the glorious Black leader Antonio Maceo. Máximo Gómez is likewise recognized as the most disciplined and discreet military chief in our history.

Looking at it from another angle, how can we not admire the indignation of Bonifacio Byrne when, from a distant boat returning him to Cuba, he saw another flag alongside that of the single star and declared, "My flag is that which has never been mercenary..." immediately adding one of the most beautiful phrases I have ever heard, "If it is torn to shreds, it will be my flag one day... our dead raising their arms will still be able to defend it!" Nor will I forget the blistering words of Camilo Cienfuegos that night, when, just some tens of meters away, bazookas and machine guns of U.S. origin in the hands of counterrevolutionaries were pointed toward that terrace on which we stood.

Obama was born in August of 1961, as he himself explained. More than half a century has transpired since that time. Let us see, however, how our illustrious guest thinks today:

"I have come here to bury the last remnant of the Cold War in the Americas. I have come here to extend the hand of friendship to the Cuban people," followed by a deluge of concepts entirely novel for the majority of us:

"We both live in a new world, colonized by Europeans," the U.S. President continued, "Cuba, like the United States, was built in part by slaves brought here from Africa. Like the United States, the Cuban people can trace their heritage to both slaves and slave-owners."

The native populations don't exist at all in Obama's mind. Nor does he say that the Revolution swept away racial discrimination, or that pensions and salaries for all Cubans were decreed by it before Mr. Barack Obama was 10 years old. The hateful, racist bourgeois custom of hiring strongmen to expel Black citizens from recreational centers was swept away by the Cuban Revolution - that which would go down in history for the battle against apartheid that liberated Angola, putting an end to the presence of nuclear weapons on a continent of more than a billion inhabitants. This was not the objective of our solidarity, but rather to help the peoples of Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau and others under the fascist colonial domination of Portugal.

In 1961, just one year and three months after the triumph of the Revolution, a mercenary force with armored artillery and infantry, backed by aircraft, trained and accompanied by U.S. warships and aircraft carriers, attacked our country by surprise. Nothing can justify that perfidious attack which cost our country hundreds of losses, including deaths and injuries

As for the pro-yankee assault brigade, no evidence exists anywhere that it was possible to evacuate a single mercenary. Yankee combat planes were presented before the United Nations as the equipment of a Cuban uprising.

The military experience and power of this country is very well known. In Africa, they likewise believed that revolutionary Cuba would be easily taken out of the fight. The invasion via southern Angola by racist South African motorized brigades got close to Luanda, the capital in the eastern part of the country. There a struggle began which went on for no less than 15 years. I wouldn't even talk about this, if I didn't have the elemental duty to respond to Obama's speech in Havana's Alicia Alonso Grand Theater.

Nor will I attempt to give details, only emphasize that an honorable chapter in the struggle for human liberation was written there. In a certain way, I hoped Obama's behavior would be correct. His humble origin and natural intelligence were evident. Mandela was imprisoned for life and had become a giant in the struggle for human dignity. One day, a copy of a book narrating part of Mandela's life reached my hands, and - surprise! - the prologue was by Barack Obama. I rapidly skimmed the pages. The miniscule size of Mandela's handwriting noting facts was incredible. Knowing men such as him was worthwhile.

Regarding the episode in South Africa I must point out another experience. I was really interested in learning more about how the South Africans had acquired nuclear weapons. I only had very precise information that there were no more than 10 or 12 bombs. A reliable source was the professor and researcher Piero Gleijeses, who had written the text **Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976**, an excellent piece. I knew he was the most reliable source on what had happened and I told him so; he responded that he had not spoken more about the matter as in the text he had responded to questions from compañero Jorge Risquet, who had been Cuban ambassador and collaborator in Angola, a very good friend of his. I located Risquet; already undertaking other important tasks he was finishing a course which would last several weeks longer. That task coincided with a fairly recent visit by Piero to our country; I had warned him that Risquet was getting on and his health was not great. A few days later what I had feared occurred. Risquet deteriorated and died. When Piero arrived there was nothing to do except make promises, but I had already received information related to the weapons and the assistance that racist South Africa had received from Reagan and Israel.

I do not know what Obama would have to say about this story now. I am unaware as to what he did or did not know, although it is very unlikely that he knew absolutely nothing. My modest suggestion is that he gives it thought and does not attempt now to elaborate theories on Cuban policy.

There is an important issue:

Obama made a speech in which he uses the most sweetened words to express: "It is time, now, to forget the past, leave the past behind, let us look to the future together, a future of hope. And it won't be easy, there will be challenges and we must give it time; but my stay here gives me more hope in what we can do together as friends, as family, as neighbors, together."

I suppose all of us were at risk of a heart attack upon hearing these words from the President of the United States. After a ruthless blockade that has lasted almost 60 years, and what about those who have died in the mercenary attacks on Cuban ships and ports, an airliner full of passengers blown up in midair, mercenary invasions, multiple acts of violence and coercion?

Nobody should be under the illusion that the people of this dignified and selfless country will renounce the glory, the rights, or the spiritual wealth they have gained with the development of education, science and culture. I also warn that we are capable of producing the food and material riches we need with the efforts and intelligence of our people. We do not need the empire to give us anything. Our efforts will be legal and peaceful, as this is our commitment to peace and fraternity among all human beings who live on this planet.

Fidel Castro Ruz

March 27, 2016

10:25 p.m.

[Source: *Granma Internet Edition*- <http://en.granma.cu/cuba/2016-03-28/brother-obama>]

**19 April 2016:** Castro's speech at the valedictory session of the Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba (16-19 April 2016). Raul Castro elected first Secretary.



**13 August 2016:** Fidel Castro's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

NOTE: The timeline is not based on any original research work. However, we tried our best to crosscheck and verify the facts and information referred hereto. The timeline is prepared primarily for the peace and solidarity activists. Relevant facts are collected primarily from various online sources.