

**ABSOLVED BY HISTORY**



# ABSOLVED BY HISTORY

**Luis Báez**

Translated by  
**Angie Todd**

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*To Jesús Montané Oropesa, who dedicated  
his life to Fidel and the Revolution*



*There are solar and telluric men; they look like the eagle, they glitter like a star, they feel like the bowels of the Earth, the breast of the seas and the continental immensity would feel.*

JOSÉ MARTÍ





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## TESTIMONY OF PATIENCE

*I have seen the sheets that comprise this book growing day by day. A book that was born of tenacity and loyalty and that could not have been made in any other way. At the moment of combing the news, pursuing it until he makes it his own, of finding someone we all want to hear interviewed, of seeking in events the seam that makes them transcendent, and applying himself to that as if he was the last stoic of the Cuban written press, there is nobody more stubborn than Luis Báez—a warm man with no false modesty or vain posturings.*

*You can call at his house at 3:00 A.M. with no problem. You will find him working on his next book, amazed at the history he has in his hands, and in passing he will tell you the news of the day that is about to dawn, because he has just returned from the newsroom of Granma or Juventud Rebelde, has already reviewed the digital editions of the principal world dailies and, probably, by then has an exact idea of the direction events of the previous day are to take.*

*There is nothing like his astrologer's regard to know where an event could lead us and to what limits the exercise of the press can reach, without ever hiding his impassioned defense of the Revolution and its very concrete political claims.*

*Without any doubt, it is an amazing case of passion for the finest occupation in the world, as Gabriel García Márquez has called journalism. Whoever pays attention to his extensive bibliography, which already stands at eleven published works and thousands of pieces in the principal Cuban media, has to wonder where he found the time to link so many personalities under one sole credit and has done so with such professional rigor to a point that one cannot study journalism in Cuba in the latter half of the 20th century without having recourse to his name.*

*His interviews can be enjoyed in various contexts: from the portrait of the figures to the provocative style, the sensibility alert to surprise us and leave us in suspense, the subtle strategy of making us feel that what we are reading inevitable leaves a mark on us. I dare to affirm that there is not one of Báez' works that lacks that essential touch which compensates in bounds for one's reading.*

*As I stated before, I have had the privilege of being present for the framework of this volume, which really was born on the day that this grand-league journalist met with Fidel Castro for the first time. From then—maybe without knowing it—Luis began to write it, to fill it with infinite patience and joy, with a will that in the end made accomplices of many colleagues and even those attesting, who*

*sent him the words of other known figures or suggested where he might find other opinions.*

*In that way Absolved by History, where more than 200 people just reply to one question, is the fruit of solidarity, indebted at the same time to Luis Báez' admiration and profound affection for our Comandante en Jefe; someone that we are able to see in his magnificent stature and following his intense, prodigious life step by step, through distinct—and not always devoted—regards.*

*It is very difficult not to find here the exceptional revolutionary, a man who is the embodiment and conscience of his country, along with the loving, fertile side of the journalist who has made it possible to contain in one single volume such a multifaceted and exceptional testimony.*

*It is a book that anticipates for us the eternal life of a man and which talks to us of a biography finally constructed by many, where there are recurrent traits like will, which is always a discovery in Fidel; or ethics, an everyday fact in him. And the unadorned, irreversible truth is that Luis, with his inveterate mania to save history, has placed before our eyes what, to a certain extent, is a compendium of ourselves: that intimate part of our existence which has made a vote of faith with Fidel and which is, as can be seen here, accompanied by the*

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*words and admiration of the most different personalities, some of them anchored, like him, in the definitive history of humankind.*

ROSA MIRIAM ELIZALDE

## MAESTRO OF GENEROSITY

Ninety miles of sea, a slim belt of Caribbean blue waters, separates two worlds: Cuba and the United States. Those ninety miles have been converted into a trench, a barricade, barbed wire, high tension, into the demarcation line of two worlds, two concepts, two systems. They have become a historical limit.

Up until January 1, 1959, Washington had ample experience with its backyard Latin American politicians: it knew the price of each one and always had an indulgent smile for the promises that they had to make to gain power.

I have not forgotten the time in the early months of the revolutionary triumph when Operation Truth, organized in Havana on account of the international campaigns against the shootings brought hundreds of media representatives to the capital and a Mexican journalist commented to me:

I was astounded at Fidel Castro's way of speaking. His promises were really ridiculous in the light of the experience of what Yankee imperialism allows in our countries. But he talked as if he was totally determined to carry them out. At that moment it was impossible to confirm what had happened: An honest man had made his appearance.

From when people are born until they disappear from the Earth they pass through a stage of constant evolution in which sentiments, principles, ideas, notions,

values are gradually formed and developed and which have their basis at home, in school, in teachers. Everything that is inculcated is of great importance.

Nobody inculcated Fidel's political ideas; he reached them as a result of his meditations, reflections, observations of realities and an analysis of what others did and said.

This is of great importance in people's motivation, as they reach certain conclusions, certain ideas that motivate them to fight, that is why they are really convinced of what they are doing.

If that was not the case, the opposite could occur; in other words, they would be less and less interested in things, subjective elements would have more influence, which could lead to smugness. The idea that one has more knowledge than the rest, that one is essential, irreplaceable, becoming infatuated with what one is and does.

Fidel has always been on his guard against the above-mentioned factors, because he has the conviction that nobody can attribute to himself the merits of an entire people and millions of anonymous beings who make their everyday contribution to society. He maintains a constant concern at the existing indifference and apathy towards the economic, social and human tragedy experienced by the so-called Third World countries at the beginning of the 21st century.



For him the principle of fraternity and solidarity among peoples cannot be delayed; moreover, he believes that this principle must be an essential part of the concept of the new international economic order.

It is not only about reparations for historical injustices, but also a moral imperative for humankind.

Based on those principles, which embody an idea of justice and solidarity among the peoples, international cooperation must constitute one of the basic pillars of that new order.

Fidel is an invariably cordial man. He is an excellent and untiring conversationalist who has much to say on any issue.

Modest in his personal life. Simple. Without vanities. Without ambitions. Always concerned about his country's fate. A sincere man who has always believed in his ideas and who is totally convinced of the certainty of his points of view.

He is not the kind of person in whom personal passions influence proposals and decision making. A maestro of generosity: When he judges others he always fears offending them. His personal magnitude and singular powers of persuasion are capable of winning over those who are mistaken and dissipating confusion. His internationalist position, his solidarity with fellow human beings have been present since he began to battle at an early age.

Titles and responsibilities do not serve to judge a man like Fidel. On meeting him, his legend can

be more easily comprehended. One can see that he has grasped how to defeat his enemies. One becomes aware of how he has been able to emerge unharmed from so many dangers. By out-maneuvering like certain people easily out-manuever the fires of St. John's night.

All our revolutions (1868, 1895) have coincided with the broadest political thinking. When Fidel is making the Revolution, he is with the great political truth of our times: socialism.

The affirmation of George Worth—a friend and collaborator of Karl Marx who died at an early age in Havana 150 years ago and is buried in the Espada Cemetery—who toured the Americas and left certain observations on Cuba in the final part of his book, is very interesting: “After touring this island I believe that it will be here that the major contradictions of the American continent will be resolved.”

A century and a half later his prophecy became true when Cuban Fidel Castro made his appearance on the political scene, where he has been present in an outstanding way in national and international events.

For months I have been seeking out evaluations of Fidel Castro made by outstanding personalities in politics, the arts, education, science, sports and medicine and other spheres.

I have collected many of these considerations—235 in all, which could have been more—from vari-

ous interviews throughout the revolutionary process. I have discovered others in memoirs, speeches and various journalistic pieces.

Fidel is one of the stellar figures of this epoch, a name that is repeated with admiration on all continents and in all languages. He is loved by his people and respected by his enemies. He is a flag and a symbol of humanity.

The legendary warrior of the Sierra Maestra has been sown in the hearts of the humble. He has inserted himself in history.

LUIS BÁEZ



## HE TRAVELS INTO THE FUTURE

ABDELAZIZ BOUTEFLIKA, PRESIDENT  
OF THE DEMOCRATIC AND POPULAR  
REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA\*

It is enough to look at what is occurring in Latin America to realize that the Cuban Revolution does not represent a literary chapter but a significant dimension that will influence the development of the situation both on the Latin American continent and in the entirety of the Third World nations. That is due to the exceptional role that Fidel Castro has played and is playing.

In 1959 the whole world knew him as Fidel Castro, but in 2001 he is still the same man, with the same rigor, the same integrity, the same ethics, the same approach, the same presence, the same ideals, as much for his people as for humanity.

\*. The opinions which were originally written or spoken in other languages have been retranslated from the author's Spanish version. *Ed.*

We have had the immense privilege of having comrade Fidel as a friend who has never failed us. Fidel travels into the future, returns and explains it.

## TO LIVE

ABEL SANTAMARÍA, CUBAN REVOLUTIONARY

The one that has to live is Fidel.

## OFFERING THEIR HEART

ARGENTINE ADOLFO PÉREZ ESQUIVEL, NOBEL  
PEACE PRIZE LAUREATE

The Cuban people and Fidel Castro are offering us their heart, their life, everything, and I believe that this is a marvelous example of life and integrity, and we must remain united and continue fighting, because the fight is not over.

There are no accidents in history, all this suffering of our peoples was programmed, organized to destroy nations and dominate them, and they have not been able to do that with Cuba.

## AN INTELLIGENT ADVERSARY

AGOSTINO CASAROLI, ITALIAN CARDINAL,  
FORMER VATICAN SECRETARY OF STATE

I visited Cuba at the invitation of the episcopacy, not the government, but the government was very welcoming. My visit was not of an official nature. But the night before I left, Fidel called the Nunciature. At that moment I was at the Cathedral, giving a mass, and they told him that I was not there and the time that I would be back.

Fidel arrived at about 11:30 P.M. We were talking for approximately two hours. It was a humane and cordial conversation.

One of the first things that the *Comandante* said to me was: "I was imagining a fat monsignor and I have found myself with a very modest and humble slight man." That was his first positive impression of my person.

The conversation took shape without any kind of agenda, nor was the object of the meeting to establish something concrete, something political concerning Church-State relations but, in the end, all those problems were aired.

My memory is tinged with nostalgia, because I have not only met the country but a man of superior intelligence, of great culture and with

ideas. Naturally, we didn't agree in all ideas but, in the end, the conversation was very interesting and also, in certain aspects, agreeable. Talking with an intelligent adversary is much better than talking with an unintelligent friend. In that way the memory of it is a good memory.

## RELATIONSHIP OF FRIENDS

ALEXANDER ALEXIEV, JOURNALIST, FORMER  
SOVIET UNION AMBASSADOR TO CUBA

I arrived in Havana in the second half of 1959. I received the visa from the Cuban embassy in Switzerland. I stayed at the Sevilla Hotel. My first meeting with Fidel took place on the top floor of the National Institute for Agrarian Reform (INRA), currently the headquarters of the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (MINFAR).

During the conversation Fidel communicated to me the government decision to establish trade relations with the Soviet Union at an appropriate moment.

From that moment onwards a sincere and relaxed communication was established between us. A relationship of friends. He is an honest,



valiant, and sincere man. Fidel is a brilliant politician and strategist.

## A CONCRETIZATION

ALEJO CARPENTIER, CUBAN WRITER

We—persons of my generation—have found in the Revolution the realization of our profound aspirations. The cases of abandonment worth mentioning can be counted on the fingers of one hand. And I wouldn't say that those aspirations were only Cuban ones, but also Latin Americans in general. In other words, our hopes for a different America, a better America, projected into the future in a climate of justice, dynamism, strength and the affirmation of different nationalities, found a concretization in the Cuban Revolution and the ideas of Fidel Castro.

## IMPRESSIVE MOMENTS

COLONEL-GENERAL ALEXEI DEMENTIEV, FIRST CHIEF OF THE SOVIET MILITARY ADVISORS IN CUBA

During the Missile Crisis I spent the most impressive moments of my life together with Fidel.

I was at his side for most of the time. At one point we felt that an attack from the United States was imminent and Fidel took the decision to call a full alert. Within a few hours the people were in combat position. Fidel's faith in his people and that of his people and of we Soviets in him was impressive.

Fidel placed a lot of emphasis on the training of cadres from the top downwards. He would always say to us that the time would come when the military aspect would move onto a secondary plane and the economy onto the first, but at that time, the most important thing was to survive, to save the Revolution. Without any doubt whatsoever, Fidel is one of the political and military geniuses of this century.

## SIGNIFICANT SUCCESSES

ALFONSO LÓPEZ MICHELSEN, INTELLECTUAL,  
POLITICIAN, FORMER PRESIDENT OF COLOMBIA

The Cuban Revolution has achieved significant successes in health and education under Fidel Castro's leadership. I have not met with Fidel for at least seven years, but I have closely followed

his activities and the developments taking place in Cuba in these highly difficult circumstances (the special period), which seemingly have been overcome. This visit to Cuba has been one of the most beneficial, because I have had contacts that have made it possible for me to perceive the developments that have occurred in the country.

### ALL THE PEOPLE SUPPORT HIM

ALFRED GRUENTHER, U.S. GENERAL, FORMER  
HEAD OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY  
ORGANIZATION (NATO), OF THE PENTAGON  
AND THE RED CROSS IN THE UNITED STATES

Everyone should bear in mind that there has been a change of government in Cuba and that all the people support the regime of Dr. Fidel Castro. Many persons do not want to acknowledge that the Cuban Revolution is a distinct revolution.

## THE CHOSEN ONE

ALFREDO GUEVARA, CUBAN INTELLECTUAL

I am what I am, not anyone else, and for that reason I ask your permission to arrive at our epoch, those days when the generation of which I am part was constantly seeking the prophet, someone within us who could take up the shield traversing roads and mountains. Later, we knew, he was called Fidel, he is called Fidel.

He “was at my side” that day when we entered the Alma Mater of the University of Havana. Historians are already saying “he was with him” and that delights me. He was the *chosen one* and, as often occurs in the passing of the years, history transforms the hero or the chosen one into a *patriarch*. If I see him, if once again I find myself in proximity to him, I will always find him surrounded by young people arriving in vast waves. The pace is cautious and must be so, first of all we have to safeguard what we have won; the sail that fills with the wind at its stern is already making it advance with new helmsmen. The hero who is still a hero is the patriarch; and the patriarch is the hero.

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## THINGS ARE DIFFERENT

ALFREDO SÁNCHEZ BELLA, POLITICIAN  
AND FORMER SPANISH AMBASSADOR  
IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The large sugar investors continue thinking of the infinite capacity for corruption that the inveterate customs of the country allow and even impose; they believe that Cuba is a country apart and that all revolutions always end up becoming totally dissolute. But, on this occasion, with Fidel Castro, things are different, because they are unaware that they are now confronting a new and totally unprecedented phenomenon, an incomparable will capable of attaining unimagined goals.

The new leader can be denied anything, but his will and perseverance in maintaining his guidelines in the face of any event and in the most difficult circumstances definitively cannot be denied or ignored. And, day by day, his authority in the country is incomparable and the support of the youth unconditional.

We are facing a new myth that is going to cost great effort and pain to destroy. Because this kind of revolution of a markedly social nature can rarely be turned back.

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## THE WEIGHT WOULD KILL HIM

ALICIA ALONSO, CUBAN BALLERINA

Maybe Fidel hasn't noticed, but each time I find myself facing him, I have felt that I have to stand up there in order to defend him from anything that they might want to do to him. Every time I meet Fidel I become nervous.

Out of the many world figures that I have known he has left the profoundest impression on me due to his simplicity, his humane character. One regards him and cannot fail to think: "This man has done this. This man has been fighting for so long." It is something that grows in you, grows and ends up crushing you. After that you become a part of all that world and enjoy the nature of that human being. You can feel him. You become part of him.

He is not local. He is part of history. Not only of our history but of the history of humanity.

I think that he is so great that he becomes just a little part, a simple thing. If he was aware of how great he is, the weight would kill him.

## AN INSPIRATION

ALICE WALKER, U.S. WRITER

They have not been able to kill him and that has angered them. They have not been able to kill that man who has persisted in being what he is for years in the face of the most powerful country on Earth. It is something amazing.

He is a sequoia, a giant old tree that continues to stand while others have been mown down, and they are desperate to finally fell him. And then we will have nobody like him. We will have other marvelous people and we ourselves will be what we have to be, but he is an inspiration.

## I FEEL HONOURED

AMADOU-MAHTAR M'BOW, SENEGALESE  
ACADEMIC, FORMER DIRECTOR-GENERAL  
OF UNESCO

I feel honored in having received the decoration from a man like Fidel Castro, who has fought for the independence, dignity, freedom and progress of the Cuban people.

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## SO THAT I WOULD LIVE

ANA FIDELIA QUIROT, CUBAN ATHLETE

On account of the accident I had in 1993, Fidel came to the hospital every day to see me. His visits, his constant concern, his affection, his questions to the doctors attending me on my health; he did all that so that I would get better, come back to life, so that I would live.

## THE MAN OF THAT SITUATION

ANDRÉ BRETON, FRENCH POET AND WRITER,  
FOUNDER OF THE SURREALIST MOVEMENT

During my time in the Caribbean I was often led to meditate on the destiny of those beautiful islands, the very moving aspirations of their peoples, and the means of opening for once and for all the secular claws that have closed on them. From the outset, I have not doubted—and they have given me the soundest reasons for believing it—that Fidel Castro was the man for that situation in the same way that Zapata could have been forty years ago for Mexico, and that maintaining the promise that he faced up



to with an almost apparent impossibility, depended on his proven intelligence and will.

## FULL OF SURPRISES

ANDRÉ VOISIN, FRENCH SCIENTIST

Fidel is a character who is always full of surprises.

## I CAN'T EXPLAIN IT

ANTONIO DEL CONDE, "EL CUATE," SMALL  
MEXICAN BUSINESSMAN

When you follow a person as I followed Fidel, you place all of your confidence in him. I have always said that he could even convince a stone. I am something of a stone, but he convinced me easily.

What did I see in him? An exaggeratedly honorable person with a memory that would make elephants jealous, someone who grows more and more every day. Nothing in my life would have had any importance if I had not believed in him from the moment I saw him. Why? I cannot explain it.

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## A CREATOR

ANTONIO NÚÑEZ JIMÉNEZ, CUBAN WRITER,  
GEOGRAPHER, HISTORIAN AND POLITICIAN

Leading a revolution and building a new society is, in part, like advancing in stretches through the darkness, among doubts. The exceptional thing about Fidel, in his condition as the maximum leader of the Cuban Revolution, has been his extremely superior self-critical spirit.

He cannot be measured solely as a ruler or a statesman. He is the maestro of a people, because at the same time he has known how to be its most exceptional disciple. He is a creator to the same extent that he is a creation of his own people.

## THE GOOD FORTUNE

ANTONIO PUIGRET, SPANISH DOCTOR  
AND UROLOGIST

Cuba has had the good fortune to have found an honest man of untouchable rectitude: Fidel Castro.

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## MY SAINTS ARE PROTECTING HIM

ARCADIO CALVO, CUBAN BABALAWO

The Revolution has not caused me any trouble. On the contrary, it has given me every facility to exercise my rites. Within the country's possibilities, everything we have asked for has been given us. We are acknowledged by the authorities.

I receive many foreign delegations. It would be a lie to say that I have had problems with the government—that would be a deception and I have always been an honest man.

I am one hundred percent Cuban, nobody will move me from this land, and moreover, my saints are protecting Fidel.

## HE TAUGHT US TO WIN

ARMANDO HART, CUBAN INTELLECTUAL  
AND POLITICIAN

I dedicate my memories of the 1950s to our *Comandante en Jefe* with these words: To Fidel Castro Ruz, who carries in his conscience all the ethics and political wisdom that was lacking in

the 20th century. This is the key to his personality. Interlinked in one identity, both planes, the ethical and the political, reach a universal scale in him and, at the same time, can be detailed in every concrete event in his life. This trait is the strongest and most enriching of his person; one that required the Cuban tradition and, moreover, that it should attain a higher creative intelligence in the individual context.

Contemporary advances in psychology relate creative intelligence to the human faculty of feeling, thinking and acting in an interrelated manner and that this should be directed toward the transformation of reality. When this combination spills out in creativity it confirms that a higher intelligence has been achieved. I visualize this scientific proposition in Fidel Castro's conduct and life.

Félix Varela taught us to think; José de la Luz y Caballero, to learn; José Martí, to act; and Fidel Castro, to win. Martí's originality is located in the fact that he took his encyclopaedic knowledge to the plane of practical politics. With his vast culture, Fidel took up, recreated and updated this tradition in the 20th century, in what I have called "the culture of making politics." In the early years of this century, the

strength of Fidel's politics is to be found precisely in that he is creating it in a world burdened with immense complexities and extremely grave dangers as never before in its millenary history.

In terms of the new international situations Machiavelli's old slogan of "divide and rule" is no longer effective. In periods of globalization it is necessary to integrate the forces of solidarity in order to confront the dramatic challenges of the recently commenced century. Herein lies the wealth of Fidel's politics.

Some people have described Fidel as an extremist. They are very mistaken, he is a radical man, which means—as Martí noted—going to the root of things and that is not at the extremes, but at the center of truth and revolutionary action. His political genius consists of this.

Fidel's vast and profound culture does not affect in the slightest his worth in terms of approaching the practical and everyday problems that life presents. On the contrary, he presses his vast wisdom into solving them. This originality has been sustained within the Cuban spiritual tradition.

Our *Comandante en Jefe* is an unflagging and fascinating conversationalist. Those who heard

Martí always highlighted the reach and power of his words. We could affirm something similar in Fidel. A comrade said to me: Fidel is capable of convincing an Esquimo to purchase a refrigerator. I replied: His strength is even greater because, always starting from ethical principles, he is capable of explaining to an Esquimo how to fight effectively to receive heating equipment. You will never find any word of Fidel's that does not correspond to concrete reality and people's sentiments. For that reason, when people say: "That's what Fidel said," I immediately ask where, when and in whose presence. Because all Fidel's orientations are of great depth and related to very concrete and direct situations.

Finally, Fidel is a Christian in the most original and revolutionary sense... There is no incompatibility between a culture rooted in Christianity and Marxist-Leninist thought as we interpret it in our country. In the conclusions of the Pedagogy 2001 Conference, he gave a wide-reaching speech on the major educational, cultural and social programs that Cuba is promoting, both within the country and in the international context. He insisted on confidence in human beings, in their generosity and intelligence. After he had con-

cluded his speech I was talking with a Catholic leader from a friendly country with whom I had discussed issues related to Fidel's teaching and ideas. With the impression of that speech I said to him: "You see that Fidel is a Christian? He expressed through all his pores the finest Christian sentiments of life."

For these reasons, he was able to affirm in the initial years of the Revolution: "Whoever betrays the people betrays Christ."

## THE MATERIAL OF A HERO

ARMANDO LLORENTE, SPANISH JESUIT PRIEST

Fidel Castro is to follow a law degree and we have no doubt that he will fill the book of his life with brilliant pages. Fidel is an uncut diamond and the artist has the spark.

I was his teacher at Belén School. I always saw the material of a hero in Fidel Castro and was convinced that the history of his homel and would have to speak of him one day.

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## ABSOLUTE DOMINION

ARTHUR MILLER, U.S. DRAMATIST

The conversation I had with Fidel Castro couldn't have been more interesting. In it he covered many issues and demonstrated, as always, an absolute dominion of the subjects covered.

## HE DOESN'T FOSTER A CULT

ARTHUR SCHLESSINGER, JR., U.S. INTELLECTUAL

Fidel Castro does not foster a personality cult. It is difficult to find a poster or even a postcard of Castro anywhere in Havana. The icon of Fidel's revolution, visible everywhere, is Che Guevara.

## HISTORY MAKES FRIENDS

ARTURO ALAPE, COLUMBIAN WRITER  
AND RESEARCHER

Fidel Castro was in Bogotá on April 9, 1948. At that time he was 23 and was attending a stu-



dent congress. Some 400 folios of the 7000 comprising the legal procedure on the assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán are devoted to Fidel. The Colombian reaction was quick to charge a figure that was steadily acquiring, with increasing strength, a continental connotation and profile.

Fidel knew and admired Gaitán, and when the events of that April exploded, he was in solidarity with the pain of my people, shared their sentiments of frustration on seeing the leader fall murdered and, like any Colombian, immersed himself in the events.

However, the reactionary forces perceived him as an instigator, a representative of international Communism, as if the *raison d'être* of the April 9 uprising was implicit in the later actions and thinking of the Cuban revolutionary. But what Fidel in fact did was to join the events with pride. It is ironic: while the figure of Fidel greatly enlarged, his accusers were left with nothing more than the accusation in their hands.

I have always thought that history makes people intimate friends: I felt his friendship on account of his participation in the event that it befell me to reconstruct. Above all, his account of history in two voices impressed me. On the

one hand, he narrated his participation; on the other, he judged critically, reflected on the *Bogotá-zo*. It was as if he was unfolding his own history and recreating it through his memory... it was as if he was acting out his own history. At the beginning of our conversation he remained seated, but when he grew emotional in the light of memories, he began to pace the room with long strides as if he wanted to retrace with his memory the thirty years separating him from that April 9.

Knowing Fidel personally, talking with him for a long time, was a very emotional experience for me...

## CONSTANTLY CONSTRUCTING

ATHOS FAVA, ARGENTINE POLITICIAN

Fidel occupies a very particular place in the revolutionary process. He is a case that rarely occurs in life. He has to be analyzed historically, concretely.

He not only plays the role of the theoretician who defines strategic lines in the key problems of the economy or science, but is also

a leader who is constantly constructing and seeing if those ideas proposed in the laboratory of life are taking shape.

He is a man who constantly tours the works, who is constantly learning and offering his experience. He is like a sponge that takes and gives. He is a key element in the construction of the new Cuba; in the midst of an island, facing the wind, in the jaws of the enemy, Fidel is playing a fundamental role and, above all, has made himself responsible for preparing the renovation by promoting youthful cadres proven by the Revolution which, in any circumstance, can continue advancing.

## ALL MY RESPECT

AUGUSTO ROA BASTOS, PARAGUAYAN WRITER

I have always been in favor of the Cuban Revolution, which is inserted in the historical line of our independence revolutions and, of course, the leaders of these revolutions merit all my respect and consideration, as much Fidel Castro as Che Guevara, who in these days is an almost mythical world figure.

## DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE

BEATRIZ ALLENDE, CHILEAN POLITICIAN

My first personal contact with Fidel is something that my father—Salvador Allende—and I vividly remember. It was in Oriente, in Holguín, at the inauguration of the Che Guevara brigade. We arrived a little late. We advanced along a little path and suddenly, among the bushes, we saw a campaign tent within a little forest.

All at once I distinguished his profile and his hand. I stood still, without being able to advance or retreat. I was rooted to the spot. I couldn't speak, I couldn't say anything: as if I was dumb. My father, who was bringing up the rear, pushed me forward saying: "What's the matter, my daughter?" But he was perfectly aware of what was the matter with me.

But then, the *Comandante* has a way of making one lose your timidity, so without realizing it, you are soon talking with him. It is difficult for you to imagine what Fidel represents for a Latin American.

The impact was a definitive one. I happened to witness public meetings, to hear Fidel's speeches, to listen to his proposals.

During my first journey to Cuba in 1960 I was lucky enough to attend the ceremony marking the nationalization of U.S. companies on August 7, which took place in the Latin American Stadium. When I saw the people, so decided, organized and aware, I realized that they are invincible. I witnessed the affection between the people and Fidel when he lost his voice for a few minutes. Everyone was concerned that nothing would happen to him. I will never forget that rally.

Sometimes, when my father is with us and we start recalling anecdotes, he will suddenly say that he would like to return to Cuba. In reality, he would seem to be homesick for it.

## AHEAD OF HISTORY

BEATRIZ PAGÉS, MEXICAN JOURNALIST  
AND EDITOR OF THE MEXICAN *SIEMPRE* MAGAZINE

Fidel Castro's watch is always fifteen minutes ahead, on his wrist and before history. He is a man of principle and convictions, of transcendental and universal values; infinite ones, not of the moment, frivolity, passing use or opportunism.

Fidel, as he is called by campesinos and workers, women and children, students and physicians, lawyers and school teachers, is a kind of watchman that observes world change from the loftiness of his intelligence and comprehends and interprets it, not like the rustic villager with a mule and a hoe, but with the profundity and talent, encyclopaedic culture and wisdom only possible in certain brains selected by biology and circumstance.

## AN HONOR FOR ME

BELISARIO BETANCURT, INTELLECTUAL, POLITICIAN,  
FORMER PRESIDENT OF COLOMBIA

My friendship with Fidel Castro is an honor for me and is based on the premise of reciprocal respect for each other's attitudes, thoughts and tendencies. He is a man who is profoundly respectful of the thinking of others.

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## HUMANE SPIRIT

BEN BELLA, POLITICIAN, FORMER PRESIDENT  
OF ALGERIA

The presence of Cuban doctors in Algeria is part of the fraternal sisterhood and indestructible friendship between the peoples of Cuba and Algeria, as well as Fidel Castro's humane spirit of solidarity.

I was informed that the Cuban doctors and health professionals were leaving for their country and wanted to come to see them off and thank them on behalf of the people for their services, which they have offered us with such enthusiasm and altruism.

## POPULAR ESSENCES

BENJAMÍN CARRIÓN, ECUADORAN NOVELIST

Never in the history of the continent—from Netzahualtcoyotl and Atahualpa; from Bolívar, Morelos and San Martín; from José Martí, Eloy Alfaro and Francisco Madero—has such a profound voice from the entrails of the peoples been heard like the voice of today's Cuba, expressed in

the apostolic words of Fidel Castro, which are made of all the great popular essences: anger and protest, jubilation and singing, justice and hope.

## GREAT LEADERS

BERTA ZAPATA, MEXICAN INTELLECTUAL

Future generations will recall Fidel Castro as the great leaders of Our America and the world are recalled in history. They will acknowledge him as the man who took the sentiment of his people and their acquisition of dignity to its highest expression, because he has never wavered, when others have done so for far less, and his indefatigable fight is to keep on high the flags for which millions of people have died in Latin America.

## FEW ARE BORN

BLAS ROCA, CUBAN POLITICIAN

Fidel is an exceptional figure. His capacity to foresee, to look far ahead greatly impressed me



from the outset. That capacity which I would qualify as strategic, combined with a tactical capacity for the immediate, for the now, for what is occurring now, and to resolve what is occurring now bearing in mind the possible course of events. That is the most impressive thing about Fidel.

Fidel's contribution to social struggles is unquestionable. First his personal influence in the world. What he signifies. The tremendously surprising weight that he has. And I think not only in what can be seen, but also in what cannot be seen. In politics what cannot be seen is always more than what can be seen.

I believe that Fidel has made an enormous contribution to the Communist movement. He has reaffirmed and confirmed in practice the justice of Marxist principles, of Marxism-Leninism as a guide for revolutionary action for the construction of socialism. There is no doubt of that.

And everything that Cuba has done is directly related to Fidel, to his decisiveness, to his great capacity as a leader, his amazing capacity. One of those leaders of whom few are born in this world.

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## IF YOU KNEW HIM

BOB TABER, U.S. JOURNALIST

Fidel Castro is not a modern Robin Hood, nor is the revolution that he is advocating a revolt according to the general rule in Latin America: it is an integrated revolution with a social content that aspires to consecrate freedom and full dignity of humankind by means of its economic consolidation.

Fidel is a revolutionary, not a political caudillo. Far from defeating him, you should be fortifying him. And if you knew him well, if you were to admit the justice of his cause, you would understand that you will gain nothing by force, except for his impassioned reaction.

## TRUE TO YOUR TRUST

CAMILO CIENFUEGOS, CUBAN REVOLUTIONARY,  
COMMANDER OF THE REBEL ARMY

In my hands, the promotion to the rank of Commander of the 26th of July Revolutionary Army. On receiving such a high honor and responsibility I have sworn to perfectly fulfill the above-

mentioned position and work to the limits of my strength to accelerate the triumph of the Revolution.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be of more service to this extremely worthy cause, for which I will always be prepared to give my life.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be more useful to our long-suffering homeland.

It would be easier to stop breathing than to stop being true to your trust. Always at your orders.

## LISTENING TO HIM WITHOUT BLINKING

CARLOS ALTAMIRANO, POLITICIAN, FORMER  
GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY  
OF CHILE

Cuba is a distinct experience. It is the first Socialist revolution on American soil; its struggle constitutes a legend and a mammoth challenge to the leading classes of the continent. The United States tried to besiege and blockade it; it is David against Goliath.

The Cuban Revolution is the historical event of the greatest magnitude to have taken place on our continent this century.

I have marvelous memories of Fidel, due to his astounding intelligence, eloquence and pedagogical capacity.

It is not easy to listen to someone for four or five hours without becoming bored, without blinking even for a second, but Fidel possesses an intelligence and a capacity for communication that I have never witnessed in anybody else. I have known some Nobel Prize laureates and many great politicians of this century, but it was Fidel who most impressed me. He is a veritable waterfall of ideas and develops all of them in a brilliant way.

He is not always right, but his ideas have such a forceful base and are expressed with such force and conviction that his capacity for seduction is irresistible. I am sure that even his worst enemy would be hypnotized after spending one hour with him.

## POWER OF CONVICTION

CARLOS MARÍA GUTIÉRREZ, URUGUAYAN

WRITER AND JOURNALIST

I met Fidel Castro in the Sierra Maestra where I went to interview him.

I saw him risking his life every day and suffering the terrible conditions of mountain life. His merit lies in propitiating that modification of the initial proposal—a young, valiant and virtually solo leader, calling for an uprising—and in having stimulated an entire young Cuban generation to assume responsibilities and consider the heroic episodes of the assault on the Moncada Garrison or the *Granma* landing as mere starting points for a radical transformation of the country.

With a beard that adds a few years to his youthful appearance and his natural heavy build augmented by sweaters and heavy shirts, the first impression of him is of a man who has thrived on the harshness of life in the Sierra, but no sooner had he rammed on his tortoiseshell glasses, meditated a moment and begun to talk in his soft voice, every now and again his slow movements and tranquil tone reveal ardent inflexions and a natural power of conviction.

Fidel possesses to a high degree that intuition that is only given to some politicians and allows them to divine very quickly the intimate attitude of their interlocutors.

## NO HISTORICAL ACCIDENT

CARLOS RAFAEL RODRÍGUEZ, CUBAN

INTELLECTUAL AND POLITICIAN

It is no historical accident that the forces led by Fidel Castro took their place at the head of the revolutionary process. That position was not conquered simply by those exceptional ingredients most talked of: a courage that could not be bought, tactical audacity, combative firmness. In addition to those—and we could say above them—the profound political comprehension that what Cuba needed was not a “constitutional restoration” but an in-depth revolution is at the heart of his triumph. That thought figures as the leading thread in the speech *History Will Absolve Me*.<sup>1</sup>

1. During the trial of the assailants on the Moncada and Carlos Manuel de Céspedes Garrisons in Santiago de Cuba and Bayamo, respectively, Fidel Castro assumed his own defense. On October 16, 1953 he made the pal that was later published as *History Will Absolve Me*. Ed.

## HE SAW IT ALL FROM SO CLOSE

CELIA SÁNCHEZ, CUBAN REVOLUTIONARY

The people who knew the Fidel of before really realize who Fidel is. The one who could visualize the Ciudad Escolar Camilo Cienfuegos (Educational Institution), the armed militias that he talked about in the beginning in the Sierra, when there wasn't even anything to eat...



Educational institution, with 20,000 children, many more of which we are going to make, to educate, train the people, because here we will have to continue arming ourselves... And I thought: "Arming ourselves, what for? Once we win it won't be necessary. And it wasn't so easy to arm the campesinos there, despite them being subjugated and oppressed for such a long time. Fidel had to talk and talk to them. Yes, Fidel saw it all from so close! He saw everything..."

## REACHING THE SKY

CELIA SANDY, UK WRITER, GRANDDAUGHTER  
OF WINSTON CHURCHILL, FORMER BRITISH  
PRIME MINISTER

Talking with Fidel Castro is like reaching the sky.

## BEING CUBAN

CELSO DELGADO, MEXICAN POLITICIAN  
AND DIPLOMAT

Being Cuban is an elevated and valiant substantive in the international community. And this



Cuban being is the human being Fidel, a human synthesis of the universal existence of the oldest, present and future aspirations of this great people.

Fidel is an outstanding Latin American. He is a man who has contributed to and spectacularly meant for the independent political development of the exploited peoples of the 20th century. He is an innate revolutionary. And innate revolutionaries are always revolutionaries, always transforming the society surrounding them, and transforming themselves. Fidel is a man who is creating. And to be what Fidel is needs the *sine qua non* condition of being human.

## WE REFUSED

CHARLES DE GAULLE, GENERAL, POLITICIAN,  
FORMER PRESIDENT OF FRANCE

When the United States broke off its relations with Cuba and invited us to prohibit our ships from sailing for the island, we maintained our embassy in Havana and refused to practice the embargo.

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## HE MOVED HISTORY

CHRISTIAN PONCELET, POLITICIAN  
AND PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH SENATE

Fidel Castro moved history with his international influence and, above all, is known for the will to liberate his country.

## ECUMENICAL AMPLITUDE

CINTIO VITIER, CUBAN INTELLECTUAL

The anti-imperialist content of all Fidel's actions places him at the center of contemporary history in terms of what has come to be accumulated and defined, as a unique decisive battle, of the millenary movements of oppression in the face of the imperative of a social ethics on which—materially and spiritually—the survival of the human species is becoming more dependent.

When the Marxist principles that he freely assumed in his youth, in particular those laying the foundations of the scientific dismantling of capitalism, were transfused into Martí's thinking, which admits them despite methodologi-

cal objections and philosophical distances, recognizing the humanism of radically taking sides “with the poor of the Earth...”—a political-spiritual event prepared by the generation of Mella and Rubén<sup>2</sup>—that gave Fidel an argument of Latin American amplitude that in practice has become ecumenical.

After numerous tests, the conjunction he has always sought between analysis and action, intransigence and lucidity, reaching the boundary of the real possibilities of objective and subjective factors in a battle against such a disproportionate enemy, has brought him to a kind of balance in which foresight and rebelliousness are equivalent.

Thus he is demonstrating that rebellion against any historical fatalism is the only prudent action. Having reached this point, beyond any account of accuracies and errors, by preaching with the example of the Cuban people's independence and resistance, he has become

2. Julio Antonio Mella (1903-29) and Rubén Martínez Villena (1899-1934), revolutionary leaders, who fought against the government of the dictator Gerardo Machado (1925-1933). Mella founded the first Communist Party of Cuba and was assassinated in Mexico on Machado's order. Martínez Villena, also a poet, died of tuberculosis. *Ed.*

a message of hope, combative encouragement and the impressive conviction of planetary victory.

## REVIVED IN CUBA

CLAUDE ROY, FRENCH WRITER

Cuba has simultaneously become a symbol and an example. A symbol: that of a people oppressed for years by the cruelty of a dictatorship and the power of a foreign imperialism. An example: that of constant hope, of indomitable courage, of victorious intelligence that overcame brute force, money, foreign arms and international egotism.

Grandeur cannot be measured in terms of surface square kilometres, in tons of steel. The entire world has associated for years the idea of the grandeur of a small nation inhabited by a great people: Cuba, and the man who embodies the Cuban Revolution: Fidel Castro.

Fidel speaks to the people, explains the problems of the Revolution person to person, explains the difficulties of the Revolution, explains the solutions. Thus, thanks to television, radio and Fidel Castro, one could say that the direct democracy of Ancient Greece is being revived in Cuba.

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## FULL OF TENDERNESS

CONCHITA FERNÁNDEZ, CUBAN SECRETARY

Having worked at Fidel's side is one of the great joys and honors I have had in my life. Fidel is a man full of kindness and tenderness. He lives solely for his work, for his people.

## HARD TO KILL

DANNY GLOVER, U.S. ACTOR

Fidel Castro is hard to kill.

## MUCH DELICACY

DARÍO CASTRILLÓN HOYOS, COLOMBIAN  
CARDINAL, PRO-PREFECT OF THE VATICAN  
CLERGY CONGREGATION AND FORMER  
PRESIDENT OF THE LATIN AMERICAN  
EPISCOPAL COUNCIL (CELAM)

I am a very frank person. I am not afraid to speak of differences, because one should utilize historical opportunities. One cannot be

a hypocrite. I put it to Fidel that I did not understand religious limitations in the country. I know that these things have been changing.

I perceived a man who is very concerned over certain details that perhaps he does not recall.

We were talking of the Ameijeiras Hospital. I was impressed by his concern for the smallest details: that every bedside table had a flower. These are questions of much delicacy and have great humane meaning.

I was moved to know that illiteracy has been totally eradicated.

We had three hours of the most cordial and sincere dialogue. I retain a very pleasant memory of my conversation with Fidel Castro.

## FULL OF OPTIMISM

DAVID ROCKEFELLER, U.S. BANKER

What the Cubans have done in the fields of education and health is impressive. What has been done in higher education and the extension of access to basic education is good.

Fidel Castro is very well informed. He speaks with much enthusiasm of the positive things

that he has done. He is a very charismatic person and full of optimism.

## TALKING WITH HIM

DENG XIAO PING, PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC  
OF CHINA POLITICIAN

Tell Castro that I cannot die without talking with him.

## CAPACITY FOR FLEXIBILITY

DEWAYNE WICKMAN, FORMER PRESIDENT  
OF THE U.S. BLACK JOURNALISTS BLOC

The first impression I had of your country was in January 1999, when we dined with your president in the Palace of the Revolution. I came with a delegation brought by Congresswoman Maxine Waters. When we arrived at the palace the doors opened and we continued on our way without seeing any armed guards, none, then a large door opened and they indicated that we should approach it.

I have been in the White House on various occasions, I met twice with President Clinton

in the White House cabinet room. I went with a delegation from the Black Caucus. When you intend to go there you have to give the security agents your birth certificate and social security number various days in advance so that they can check them out. When you get to the White House you have to cross the security entrance, there are armed guards, at the end of the corridor there is a post before which you have to stop and give your name and ID card, then they confirm the veracity of your documents on the computer.

When they decide to give you authorization, they let you in and at the end of the corridor there is another room in which there are many security officers who observe you closely, and then take you through other checkpoints, until they finally let you see the president, our president.

In Cuba I was surprised, because we have been told so many times that it is a dictatorship, that it is a totalitarian regime. That it is a country where the Castro brothers rule by decree, backed up by guns. That is what we believed when we arrived at the presidential palace, at the Palace of the Revolution. But there were no guards that we could see, and they motioned us to enter and inside the door there



was only a superficial personal frisk. Afterwards they suggested leaving the items we were carrying and we entered a second room where there were two officers, and President Castro appeared in a few minutes with just one bodyguard. And for me that constituted a disconcerting difference between the president of a country which we had been told was a cruel and totalitarian dictatorship that governed with a brutal Communist fist, and the way in which I had been received at the White House by my president. The latter was exceedingly protected and guarded, and the other gave the impression of not having a lot of security.

Most of the conversation with Fidel Castro took place with the members of Congress: Maxine Waters, Julia Causins, Barbara Lee and others. But I had the opportunity of talking with him during the reception. One of the things that had most impressed me about the president is his vast knowledge of the world situation.

For us Cuba is an isolated country, a country that we do not associate with knowing much about the outside world. But when we talked with the president he talked to us of many things. He talked to us of the problems of the

Japanese yen, of the situation in the Balkans, of the president of the executive of the U.S. Federal Reserves. He has a clear grasp of many world problems.

Then we asked him various questions that we considered important, like if racism existed in the country. He told us that at the triumph of the Revolution, there was a spirit for an end to discrimination. He and many others with him thought that that would be definitive. Later he understood that many people have prejudiced views on racial problems, in conflict with the Revolution, and that he understands that sometimes it is necessary to take additional measures to do away with the problem, and not confine oneself to saying that it is not permitted.

That demonstrates a will to change, which happens over time. Many world leaders reach power with one view, which they maintain until losing power. The fascinating thing about Fidel is his capacity for flexibility, for not being inflexible, which is very important.

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## LIVING HISTORY

DIEGO ARMANDO MARADONA, ARGENTINE  
SOCCER PLAYER

It seems untrue to have a piece of history so close. He is a seducer and uses everything to envelop you. It is said that he took off with twelve men and three guns in the Sierra Maestra and now I realize why he won: he has an ironclad conviction. Fidel Castro is a figure who is impossible to forget.

He is a living history. I defend my soccer like Fidel defends his people.

## A CHAPTER APART

DOLORES IBÁRRURI, “LA PASIONARIA,” FORMER  
PRESIDENT OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF SPAIN

Cuba is a very attractive country and Fidel is a chapter apart. He is a product of Cuba and it is very difficult to find a man like him.

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## IT HAS DECIDED TO SPARE HIM

EDGARDO DE HABICH, DIPLOMAT, FORMER  
PERUVIAN AMBASSADOR TO CUBA

Fidel Castro is a legend, a myth, the man most attacked by imperialism, the man against whose life the largest number of attempts have been perpetuated and have failed; perhaps just because he feared death so little, courted it so much, that it has finally fallen in love with him and has decided to spare him.

## NATIONAL DIGNITY

EDUARDO GALEANO, URUGUAYAN WRITER

Latin America is no longer a threat. Thus it has ceased to exist. It is rarely that the universal factories of public opinion deign to cast a glance at it. But nevertheless, Cuba, which likewise is no threat to anyone, is still a universal obsession.

They cannot forgive it for continuing to exist, for continuing to be. This little island subjected to a ferocious state of siege, condemned to extermination through hunger, is refusing to let its arm be twisted out of national dignity.

I have never confused Cuba with paradise. So why should I now confuse it with hell?

I am one among those who believe that it can be loved without lying or remaining silent.

More than thirty years ago the imperial veto was applied in a thousand ways to prevent the realization of the Sierra Maestra project.

In Cuba democracy and socialism were born to be the two names of one same thing; but the bosses of the world only grant the freedom to choose between capitalism and capitalism.

The Cuban Revolution is not the Eastern European model that collapsed so easily there. The Cuban Revolution, which did not arrive from above nor was imposed from outside, has grown from the people and not against it, nor despite it; for that reason it has been able to develop a collective conscience of the homeland; the essential self-respect that is at the base of self-determination.

The blockade of Cuba has intensified with the years. A bilateral issue? That's what they say, but nobody is unaware that the U.S. blockade implies, nowadays, a universal blockade. Cuba is being denied bread and salt and all the rest. And that also implies, although many people ignore that fact, the negation of its right to self-determination.

The asphyxiating siege stretched around Cuba is a form of the most ferocious, most efficient intervention in its internal affairs.

Are there privileges in Cuba? Tourism privileges? Without any doubt. But the fact is that a more egalitarian society does not exist in the Americas. Poverty is shared: there is no milk, that's true, but milk is not lacking for children and the elderly. Food is limited. But in full crisis there are still schools and hospitals for everyone, not easy to imagine on a continent where so many people have no other teacher than the street, nor any doctor other than death.

Poverty is shared out and shared out. Cuba continues to have the greatest solidarity in the world. Cuba was the only country to open its doors to Haitian refugees from hunger and the military dictatorship that, on the other hand, were expelled from the United States.

Cuba is judged as if it had not been suffering from a continuous emergency situation for over thirty years. It is an astute enemy, no doubt, that condemns the consequences of its own acts.

Cuba is dictated courses in human rights by persons that whistle and look the other way when the death penalty is applied in other coun-

tries of America—not applied now and again, but in a systematic way: frying black prisoners in electric chairs in the United States, massacring the Indians in the Guatemala sierras and mowing down children on the streets of Brazil.

Has the valor of this minute island, condemned to solitude in a world where servility is an elevated virtue or proof of talent, ceased to be admirable? A world in which those who do not sell themselves, hire themselves out?

Fidel Castro is a symbol of national dignity. And for us Latin Americans, who are now completing five centuries of humiliation, a beloved symbol.

## PROPHET OF DISASTER

ELIO GÁSPARI, BRAZILIAN JOURNALIST

Fidel Castro, the veteran guerrilla who charmed the world by descending from the Sierra Maestra in 1959 to defeat a dictatorship, has kept his original beard, now a bit gray and sparse. He has his eternal telescopic lens rifle in his jeep, but he doesn't touch it. Today his mountain is one of papers with which, thanks to a prodigious

memory, he can compare the Brazilian trade deficit with the same sagacity as he follows the rain precipitation gauge of a sugarcane field in the eastern region of his country.

In recent years Fidel has become a kind of prophet of the disaster of the international financial system.

Creditors and debtors are facing the live coal of hundreds of billions of dollars, and one thing is certain: they cannot blame Fidel for that.

## THE IMPOSSIBLE INTO VICTORIES

ENRIQUE DE LA OSA, CUBAN JOURNALIST

Fidel is a man of the 20th century. Lenin and Fidel are the principal political figures of this century.

Fidel is a genius. He is one of those men born every 100 years. As Pablo Neruda said of Simón Bolívar: "Every one hundred years I awake when the people awake."

Fidel has demonstrated that he belongs to that stock of men capable of converting dreams into reality and the impossible into victories.



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## I DIDN'T ALWAYS BELIEVE

ENRIQUE NÚÑEZ RODRÍGUEZ, CUBAN WRITER

I didn't always believe in Fidel. I thought that the Moncada assault was madness. He was right. I estimated that the battle against the army was impossible for a group of youth. He was right. I considered that it was madness to nationalize U.S. enterprises. He was right.

I took as fact what Adlai Stevenson, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said when he affirmed that it was Cuban planes that bombed the Cuban air bases hours before the Bay of Pigs invasion. Fidel said that they were U.S. aircraft. He was right.

When the 1962 Missile Crisis occurred I felt that Fidel should be more flexible in order to avert a nuclear confrontation. Fidel maintained the line of national dignity. He was right.

Ever since then I prefer to leave the thinking to Fidel. It is logical that he has more reason than someone like me, who has been mistaken so many times.

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## HIS SIMPLICITY

ERNESTO CARDENAL,  
NICARAGUAN PRIEST AND POET

During my first visit I had a four-hour conversation with Fidel in his car, touring Havana's streets and visiting places. On getting to know him personally, I was very surprised by the gentleness of his voice. When you have only heard him in the Plaza, you cannot imagine that he would have such a gentle voice. Likewise his simplicity, his intelligence and the great interest he had in a vast quantity of things. But what most impressed me was his genius. Usually you are a genius in one sole thing, but Fidel is a genius in many.

Men like him rarely arise in life.

## HE HAS DONE MORE THAN ANYONE

ERNESTO GUEVARA, CUBAN *COMANDANTE*,  
INTELLECTUAL, POLITICIAN AND REVOLUTIONARY

That telluric force called Fidel Castro Ruz has gained a historical projection within a few years.

The future will place our prime minister in his exact place, but for us he is comparable with the most elevated figures in Latin American history. But, what are the exceptional characteristics surrounding the personality of Fidel Castro?

There are various aspects of his life and character that make him stand out far above all his comrades and followers; Fidel is a man of such great personality that he will occupy a leadership role in any movement in which he participates, and this has been the case throughout his career from student life to the premiership of our homeland and of the oppressed peoples of America.

He has the characteristics of a great leader that, combined with his personal gifts of boldness, strength and valor, and his extraordinary desire to sound out the will of the people has taken him to the position of honor and sacrifice that he occupies today.

However he has other important qualities: the capacity to assimilate knowledge and experience in order to comprehend all the aspects of a situation without losing sight of the details, his immense faith in the future, and his breadth of vision that can foresee events and

anticipate incidents, always seeing further and more accurately than his comrades.

With these great cardinal qualities, with his capacity to adhere and unite, opposing divisions that can weaken, his leadership capacity at the head of any popular action, his infinite love for the people, his faith in the future and his capacity to foresee it, Fidel Castro has done more than anyone else in Cuba to construct from noth-



ing the now formidable apparatus of the Cuban Revolution.

Fidel gave the Revolution its impulse in the initial years, the leadership, the tonic, always. Hence we are forging ahead. It does not shame us or intimidate us to say that there goes Fidel, at the head of a vast column.

## BACK TO TOMORROW

ERNESTO MADERO, DIPLOMATIC, FORMER MEXICAN AMBASSADOR TO CUBA

I began my diplomatic career in Havana. Now, thirty-eight years later, in 1978, I am returning as an ambassador and what has most impressed me is the indomitable will of those who organized the struggle; the political talent of the leaders headed by Fidel Castro.

Recently a Mexican friend asked me somewhat incredulously: "But what do you find the Cubans of today involved in... the new Cubans of whom you have talked to me?" I tried to make my response precise: "I find the new Cubans who are shaping the Revolution in the streets, in the masses, jostling me trying to get on a bus."

The Cuban reality has no precedent in the Third World, in the developed or underdeveloped worlds. Returning to Cuba is going back to tomorrow.

## THE IDEOLOGY OF MARTÍ

EUSEBIO LEAL, CITY OF HAVANA HISTORIAN

The hardest thing is to try and evaluate the impact of one figure on the consciousness of his contemporaries. The task of ordering anecdotes and testimonies from which—hopefully with passion and truth—the semblance of heroes emerges is one for biographers.

In any case, what is both disarming and moving is the grandeur that arises—like a light—from daily events. However brief the space of one's life is, it is more amazing when we can fill it completely with works.

In the case of the man who is the subject that concerns us, we have grown accustomed to the society and state being presided over by an exceptional citizen. His accomplishments admit no discussion and belong totally to the future. It will correspond to history to pronounce its verdict.

For an attentive observer, it is not difficult to find photos, manuscripts and press cuttings outlining the moment of the calling to his vocation, forged from his childhood and adolescence.

We are here before the politician, the orator, the public man... If he is stripped of any military or diplomatic attribute, we find ourselves before a character whose patrimony is nourished by the Bible or the Sainted Scriptures, the ideals of Martí and universal revolutionary thinking.

With a speaking style adorned by the flame of charisma, he has lived with the urgency of the prophets and possesses an “Ignatian” concept of discipline, which he has exercised in reading, meditation and vigil.

Although he appreciates a good table—and if he had time would enjoy preparing ingenious recipes—he eats sparingly, always less, or to be more exact, only what is necessary.

He knows much about the strange significance of wine and the labyrinths that lead it to the soul, that he can disclose its qualities and virtues as if he was reciting the verses of Omar Khayyam.

However he would leave any wine aside to savor like an elixir a milk sorbet, papaya juice or a cup of broth with twenty vegetables.

His frugality has been known to alarm his close collaborators, given that it never corresponds with exhausting work sessions which, over long periods, conclude at dawn.

He reads for duty and for pleasure, nobody dares interrupt that abstraction. The wings of his imagination take him to literary fiction, the field of battle or to the most remote scenes of history.

He admires the ancient world and its heroes. He subjects to criticism the aristocratic republic of Pericles and, being an idealist in the purest sense of the world, has been faithful to Aristotelian reasoning, Socratic deduction or the unsurpassed eloquence of Demosthenes.

Beyond the image propagated by steamrolling speeches and addresses, he is capable of bringing a select audience to its feet with a ten-minute speech or one of a few pages.

At table he can chat for hours. But in visiting room armchairs he listens patiently, questions and awaits the responses of his interlocutors. Then he remains silent to the extreme of having recorded in the wooden arm supporting his hand the imperceptible tapping of his finger.



He does not like to lose at anything. His training is based on information, Cartesian doubt, deduction... to the point of discovering the exact or that which is reasonably approximate to the truth. His memory is the fruit of that.

He loves solitude and I think that living almost always in company is the worst sacrifice the Revolution has forced him to make. His house, his family, his life... is duty. He is human, fallible... he forgets nothing, he excuses or pardons almost anything except betrayal. He is strict regarding disorder, neat in details. Nobody can touch his things, which are few and useful.

Attached to his own traditions, the memory of his paternal home in distant lands exercises over him the seduction of the distant and anonymous point of departure; destiny has overtaken him, but he knows he is the son of a providence that does not anticipate events, life or death.

Triumph is always an initiation, and when others believe that all is lost, in his opinion, it has hardly begun. He loves and cares for his own—imperceptibly—but his personal life belongs to him alone.

He rejects and admires Napoleon, whose concept of battle he has adopted: being informed of the enemy's moves, anticipating, organizing,

training... He selects the field of battle, attacks first, having also defeated the aligned parties or conspirators and concentrates his fire with energy on the weakest point.

A follower of Martí to his roots, he reserves for the Cuban National Hero a cult that he forged in his early youth. Like a crystalline spring of water he recalls passages, verses and letters; he appropriately calls him the "Apostle."

I have been one of his friends and closest disciples in the critical and unforgettable years.

But out of many many impressions I would choose that of August 5, 1994 when guided by his instinct—which rejects any form of cowardice—he headed a small detachment that moved among a riot provoked by marginal elements in City of Havana.

Previously he had instructed his comrades that nobody was to use arms without his order; and then—dispensing with them and walking with his front exposed—faced the rabble, which retreated, to the stupor of those of us accompanying him. He advanced resolutely and halted before the monument to General Maceo, like someone who was coming to render homage; without a single drop of the blood of our adversaries having been spilt.

## LOOKING AT THE PEOPLE

EZEQUIEL MARTÍNEZ ESTRADA, ARGENTINE  
WRITER

Fidel is speaking to the people assembled at the José Martí Plaza de la Revolución. As always he is dressed in his uniform of *comandante*. The crowd fills the plaza and spills over into adjacent streets, losing itself in the distance. The square has no horizon. Nor is it enclosed in the framework of the city. There is a building opposite, with windows similar to the alveoli of a huge honeycomb and which seems to be more in the country than in the city. Where are we? We are in an assembly and in the event of a solemn plebiscite. Looking closely, the faces one sees are fading away as if they were further away than they really are. Between the tribunal and the crowd there is a purely optical distance, which seems strange. The impression of distance is linked to that of stature, one would say that of a fabulous giant, one hundred times larger than the normal size of a man. Nor is the figure of Fidel Castro chiselled, configured, or neatly outlined, like the image of the crowd, free in its absolute immobility. In this photo,

we see his body and if we know that it is him it is because his body also has a personal physiognomy, as well as its gestures, and the gesture that is instantly fixed is undoubtedly his. One can see his face in profile, almost from behind. The image does not belong to us, he is not looking at us; he is looking at the people, speaking for everybody, not for us. His semi-extended arm and index finger, now not accusing or pointing but marking a rhythm, are unmistakable. That piece of the photo is Fidel Castro.

## REAFFIRMING FAITH

FABRICIO OJEDA, VENEZUELAN JOURNALIST  
AND POLITICIAN

The hour of America, the hour of justice has arrived. The spirit of popular revolution is galloping over American soil. The Revolution is growing stronger in the awareness of Cuba and America because both Fidel Castro and his comrades in the leadership have been able to affirm the peoples' faith in what a revolution signifies and what it can do.

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## THE HIGHEST EXPONENT

FAURE CHOMÓN, CUBAN INTELLECTUAL  
AND POLITICIAN

Fidel Castro has been a sculptor of ideas, given that his forging of the Cuban Revolution was the synthesis of the thinking of the most illustrious revolutionaries in our history, up to and after Martí. He has continued sculpting on his own virtues those ideas necessary to victoriously defend the Revolution from its enemies, opening the grand battle of those ideas and, from them and with them, rescuing the cause of all the peoples of the world, through which he—the highest exponent of the thinking of the Universal Revolution from Lenin to our days—proposes to save humanity. That is how I see Fidel.

## ROBINSON'S SPRING

FAUSTINO ÁLVAREZ, SPANISH JOURNALIST

We are not before the autumn of the patriarch but before the spring of Robinson. Fidel Castro, leader of the Cuban Revolution, is a man of

great personal strength. He attracts you like an evangelist sculpted in stone, he seduces you like a magus and, moreover, preserves intact a dose of cordiality and even tenderness beneath the rigor of his military uniform, his khaki dress.

## MAN OF THE PRESENT

FAUSTO BERTINOTTI, ITALIAN POLITICIAN,  
GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE COMMUNIST  
REFOUNDATION PARTY OF ITALY

Fidel Castro has an extraordinary past, is a man of the present and an outstanding world political figure.

## STEADFAST AND VALIANT

FERNANDO ENRIQUE CARDOSO, INTELLECTUAL,  
POLITICIAN, FORMER PRESIDENT OF BRAZIL

The Cuban leader remains steadfast and valiant before the United States and challenges the big powers to explain their actions. Fidel Castro's political vision was also evident during his participation in public events and tributes in

three important cities of the country after the Latin American and European Summit.

## AUTHENTIC VALUES

FERNANDO GUTIÉRREZ BARRIOS, MEXICAN  
OFFICER AND POLITICIAN

I had the opportunity to meet Fidel Castro when he was planning the defeat of the Batista dictatorship. I was convinced by his revolutionary militancy, his ideals and his leadership skills. During the time that we knew each other only one alternative existed for him, which clearly defined his conviction: to achieve his objective or die. Perhaps the slogan of the Cuban Revolution: *Patria o Muerte* (Homeland or Death) is derived from that. Time has passed and he has maintained an integral respect, as is always the case when values are authentic ones. The historical conditions of the world have been transformed. One can agree or disagree with Fidel, one can turn ones back on him when changes in the world have been raised; but without any doubt he is one of the great Latin American leaders of the second half of the 20th century.

That is in the general sphere and, for me, I openly express my affection and respect for Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution. Fidel is authentic and congruent, and for that reason worthy of respect.

## PROFOUND VISION

FRANCISCO CAAMAÑO, COMMANDER,  
DOMINICAN REVOLUTIONARY

I admire Fidel Castro's profound vision of the international problematic. The exchanges of opinion and experience I have had with a statesman of his stature have been very important to me.

## PRINCIPAL ARTIFICER

FRANCISCO JULIAO, BRAZILIAN  
CAMPEÑO LEADER

The existence of Cuba as the first Latin American nation to disown capitalism and adopt socialism, opens a horizon that the U.S. imperial power has been seeking to close in all those



thirty years of constant economic, political and military aggression, by violating the island's aerial, maritime and territorial space and attempting innumerable times to assassinate Fidel Castro, the principal artificer of the Cuban process.

## TRADITIONAL VITALITY

FRANCISCO RABAL, SPANISH ACTOR

Fidel Castro is an unequalled son of America and hopefully he will maintain his traditional vitality and perseverance for many years in order to continue defeating Washington's harassment so that Cuban independence will never be threatened again.

## TREMENDOUS THING

FRANCISCO REPILADO, "COMPAY SEGUNDO,"  
TROVA SINGER, AND CUBAN SON MUSICIAN

The embrace Fidel gave me was a tremendous thing. It is the embrace of all Cuba. For *chan chan*,<sup>3</sup> to

3. A rhythm created by Francisco Repilado. *Ed.*

please the Pope and to please Fidel is like pleasing the whole world.



## TALKING WITH FEELING

FRANK FERNÁNDEZ, PIANIST AND COMPOSER

Thinking does not get there, I prefer to talk with feeling: I LOVE HIM VERY MUCH.

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## GENUINELY EVANGELICAL

FREI BETTO, BRAZILIAN THEOLOGIAN

I learned to love Cuba, including its errors, because the positive part is much more profound, because I am a Christian and I believe that God's greatest gift is life, and there is no country in the world that defends life like Cuba, a genuinely evangelical nation.

Cuba is not paradise, but in a continent of the indigent, he who can eat is king. In the midst of disaster, the Cubans have resisted. It is the only country in the Western Hemisphere to have implanted socialism.

Fidel Castro is a privileged man on account of his Christian upbringing, his Marxist option and his assimilation of Martí's preaching. He is a modest person, who almost asks permission to be who he is... In spite of all his genius, all the history that he embodies, he succeeds in making us feel his brother.

## VORACIOUS READER

GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ, COLOMBIAN  
WRITER, NOBEL LITERATURE PRIZE LAUREATE

Fidel Castro is a voracious reader, a lover and very serious connoisseur of good literature of all times, and even at the most difficult moments he has an interesting book to hand to fill any space that should arise. I have left him a book when we have said goodbye at four in the morning after an entire night of conversation, and at midday I have met up with him again with the book already read. Moreover, he is such an attentive and meticulous reader that he can find contradictions and false information where one would least imagine. After reading *El relato de un naufrago* (*The Story of a Shipwreck Sailor*) he went to my hotel just to tell me that there was an error in the calculation of the boat's speed, so that its arrival time could not have been what I had said. He was right. On account of that, before *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* (*Chronicle of a Death Foretold*) was published, I took him the original script, and he pointed out an error in the specifications of the hunting rifle. You feel that he likes the world of literature,

that he feels very comfortable within it, and enjoys taking care with the literary content of his written speeches that are steadily more frequent. Once, not without a certain air of melancholy, he said to me: "In my next reincarnation I want to be a writer."

## I ADMIRE HIS LEADERSHIP

GEORGE MCGOVERN, U.S. POLITICIAN, FORMER  
DEMOCRATIC SENATOR

I had been interested in Fidel Castro for many years. I read everything that Herbert Matthews wrote about him and had read a lot of other literature written on the Cuban Revolution, in a way that although I am not in agreement with everything that he has done and am not a communist, nonetheless I admire his leadership and consider him to be one of the most important leaders in the world of today.

Certain of the international press have attempted to disfigure Fidel's image, but I do not always believe what the international press says. Ho Chi Minh was likewise much vituperated by the press. Once I knew President Castro, my

opinion of his capacity was genuinely greatly heightened.

## OUT OF THE ORDINARY

GERARD BOURGOIN, FRENCH ENTREPRENEUR

I feel very good with Fidel Castro, he is a man with an out-of-the-ordinary charisma who, contrary to what has been said, has a great strength for listening. A man who likes to be cultivated. He asks a lot of questions and has many ideas and, every time I have the opportunity to see him, I have a great time and we talk of many things.

## CONVINCING THE SPHINX

GERMÁN PINELLI, CUBAN JOURNALIST  
AND RADIO AND TV PRESENTER

I have known Fidel since he was a young man. I knew of his impetus, his daring and his talent. He has always had the rare vision of knowing the outcome of things. Not all people know the outcome of things. They know the beginning, they think of the end, but they are not certain

of what it is going to be. But Fidel does have that certainty. He has always had an exceptional power of grasping things. He is capable of convincing the Sphinx. The Sphinx speaks if he tells it to, due the powers of persuasion that he possesses.

## HIS TRUTH

GIANNI MINÀ, ITALIAN JOURNALIST

Fidel Castro had spoken his truth. We have taken it up not as an act of faith, but as a testimony. I have discovered a man whom I realize I will never find again in the rest of my life.

## HE IS NOT AN ORDINARY PERSON

GOAR MESTRE, BUSINESSMAN OF CUBAN ORIGIN  
LOCATED IN ARGENTINA

In Cuba we had many shameless individuals whose governments were characterized by their corruption, lack of honesty and lack of patriotism. I am one of the fiercest critics of those Cuban governments.

And, in a certain way, that could justify what Castro has done. What I regret is that he has taken another way, as Castro is not an ordinary person, like other human beings, he is not just anyone. There are human beings and human beings. Not all of us are equal nor can we be.

## VERY ATTRACTIVE FIGURE

GRAHAM GREENE, BRITISH WRITER

Fidel Castro is a very attractive figure, but far more so is the conviction that animates him. I retain a great liking for him.

## BEING INSPIRED

GREGORY PECK, U.S. ACTOR

It is time to revert the U.S. antagonism and hostility towards Latin America and, especially, towards Cuba. When I visited the Isle of Youth where young people from Africa and Latin America are studying, those from Nicaragua and Namibia caught my attention. "How is it possible," I thought then, "that the United States



does not want a movement like this for the sole reason that it is inspired by Fidel Castro?"

## FULL OF CONCERNS

GRO HARLEM BRUNDTLAND, DIRECTOR  
GENERAL OF THE WORLD HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION (WHO)

Fidel Castro is full of concerns and none of them are lacking in profound significance.

The detailed knowledge he possesses impressed me and he reveals a very clear perspective and awareness of the health problems currently being confronted by humanity.

## HISTORICAL CHARACTER

GIULIO ANDREOTTI, FORMER ITALIAN PRIME  
MINISTER

Fidel Castro is a historical character who has a particular role in world politics, above all in this world that is so uncertain.

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## POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION

HAROLD COOLEY, U.S. POLITICIAN,  
FORMER HOUSE REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE  
DEMOCRATIC PARTY

The 1959 visit to the United States of Dr. Fidel Castro constituted a positive contribution to relations between both countries and served, among other things, to create a state of opinion in Congress and encourage a greater sympathy for and understanding of Cuban problems. Castro was very sincere in the ideas he expressed.

## NEW ERA

HAROLD CRUSE, U.S. ESSAYIST

When I heard Fidel Castro speak and felt the crescendo of the people's response to his ideas, many of my cynical ideas on revolutions disappeared. I came with an open mind, I saw and I understood. What I saw is a new era in the history of the hemisphere, a new page in Western history, a page that cannot be turned back or suppressed.

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## ANY NATION

HARRY BELAFONTE, U.S. SINGER  
AND FILMMAKER

I admire Fidel Castro because for Washington any nation that elects the social system that most suits it constitutes a threat operating against its interests in the region and is accused of being Communist and immediately suffers its hostility.

## THE BEST FOR HIS PEOPLE

HARRY S. TRUMAN, POLITICIAN,  
FORMER U.S. PRESIDENT

I believe that Fidel Castro is a good guy who seems to want the best for the Cuban people; this being the situation we should sympathize with him and help him to do what is right for his people.

## ONE OF US

HAYDÉE SANTAMARÍA, CUBAN INTELLECTUAL  
AND REVOLUTIONARY

I knew Fidel as a comrade of my brother Abel, when he was a young man and sometimes went there (the apartment on 25 and O Street) to eat, to discuss, to find Abel or to talk with certain comrades. And in spite of the years, in any case, whenever I see him I become emotional, like we react in front of someone we are meeting for the first time. And that always happens to



me, even after so many years and never being much time without seeing him. Only when he was in prison or when he was in Mexico. We invariably found each other, even if it was at a distance, and there was a greeting with a look. Well, it is so emotional to know that we have him and that he is one of us.

## HE TRANSMITS TENDERNESS

HEBE DE BONAFINI OF ARGENTINA, ONE  
OF THE LEADERS OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO  
GRANDMOTHERS

My children talked a lot about Fidel to me. I think they also dreamed of meeting him one day face to face and embracing him. He speaks with such profundity. And I understood that it wasn't a formal meeting, it was a meeting of sentiment... He was very moved when I gave him my headscarf. I didn't want to talk, I wanted to think of my children, of their dreams... How many times have they wanted to be here! And I felt like a chosen one, sat there like a privileged person. When we embraced, when I felt myself embracing him, although he embraced

me as well, we were transmitting something very strong. He transmits tenderness because he is a person who always regards you directly. People's regards reveal whether they are sincere, whether they are hypocrites, whether they are formal, whether they are bored, if they do not know how to terminate an interview. All the time he was there was the time he wanted to be there.



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## THE LIVING WORD

HÉCTOR MÚJICA, VENEZUELAN JOURNALIST  
AND POLITICIAN

It's a Revolution! I said to myself, at the very moment that Fidel was narrating—in that kind of colloquium that only he knows how to make with such mastery, because it isn't an oratorical technique or a learned stunt, but the living word that erupts from his popular gut—that he had heard talk of “revolutions” since he was a child, but that this is the first Revolution that the Cuban people are making and it will not be frustrated by anything or anyone.

## ONE OF THE GREATEST STATESMEN

HEINZ DIETERICH, GERMAN PHILOSOPHER  
RESIDENT IN MEXICO

Without any doubt, Fidel Castro is one of the greatest world statesmen of the post-war period. This assessment is not a personal tribute, but is derived from the related overwhelming empirical evidence: the fact of having successfully

maintained an anti-imperialist project for forty years in extremely adverse conditions ninety miles from the modern Rome: the United States.

## VERY THOUGHTFUL

HERB. D. HALIWAL,  
CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARIAN

Fidel Castro is a very thoughtful man, highly articulate, open to an exchange of views, very pragmatic and someone who has a broad understanding of world politics and how this is reflected in the developing countries.

## POPULAR BACKING

HERBERT L. MATTHEWS, U.S. JOURNALIST WITH  
*THE NEW YORK TIMES*, THE FIRST CORRESPONDENT  
IN THE SIERRA MAESTRA, 1957

The coup by General Fulgencio Batista on March 10, 1952 marked the beginning of the end of an old political order in Cuba. Looking at history in retrospect one has the impression that it was an inevitable event.



As usual, the organized protest was made by students and youth. As soon as Fidel Castro and his young men emerged, he constituted a symbol welding together the discontented and violent opposition grew.

His self-defense in a document that, given its effect, Cubans compare with José Martí's *Presidio Político en Cuba* [Political Prison in Cuba], eloquent, exalted, lengthy—it took six hours—is still recalled because it contained the social reforms that Fidel Castro immediately put into effect after his victorious entry into Havana in January 1959. That historical declaration concluded with these famous words: "History will absolve me."

A few weeks after the *Granma* landing and their presence in the Sierra Maestra, Fidel and his men became a symbol for the construction of the militant opposition: a small armed force and a civil resistance movement.

Before Fidel Castro became a symbol and the principal leader of the rebellion, he had to prove that he was alive and initiating the struggle. He achieved that on February 24, 1957, when *The New York Times* published an interview which I had obtained a few weeks before in the Sierra Maestra.

All Cuban youth were on the side of Fidel Castro, and thousands of young men suffered police persecution, torture and death.

People who want to understand what is happening in Cuba today should be aware of this: it was a revolution of young people and it is young Cubans who are giving content and significance to the current social transformations.

The Revolution that followed the triumphant rebellion is classical in its objectives, but with Cuban characteristics.

Nothing more important can be said of the Cuban Revolution than this fact: the imposing popular support that it can count on.

It should be clearly taken into account: the process cannot be reversed, nor will Cuba ever be what it was.

## WE WILL NEVER FORGET

HO CHI MINH, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE  
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM

The Cubans, with Fidel Castro at the front, have shown much solidarity with our people and with our struggle. We Vietnamese will never forget that support.

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## THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS

HOWARD FELIX HARIAN COOKE, GOVERNOR  
GENERAL OF JAMAICA

I congratulate Fidel Castro and the Cuban people for their contributions to the world and particularly for the support lent to the liberation of Namibia and other African nations, as well as the aid given to my country in the training of doctors, nurses, athletes and in other spheres.

## INDOMITABLE PEOPLE

HOUARI BOUMEDIENNE, CHIEF OF STAFF,  
POLITICIAN, FORMER PRESIDENT OF ALGERIA

Fidel Castro is the worthy son of the homeland of José Martí and the protagonist of the Moncada assault that guide the fate of an indomitable people, the constructors of a Revolution that, like a impetuous torrent sprung from the Sierra Maestra, swept away in its passing the dictator's strongholds and defeated multiple aggressions.

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## HE BELONGS TO THE WORLD

HUGO CHÁVEZ, OFFICER, POLITICIAN,  
PRESIDENT OF THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC  
OF VENEZUELA

Without any doubt for all of us and entire generations of Latin Americans, Caribbean peoples and fighters throughout the world Fidel is a 75-year-old young man, a soldier and a dreamer. You honor us with your presence in Venezuela and fill us with joy by making us a gift of your presence and Cubans and Venezuelans sharing this day together.

Fidel does not just belong to Cuba, he belongs to this entire world of ours, to our America. After almost half a century of struggle, Fidel can show his face with full integrity and total ethics not only to the Cuban people, but to all the peoples of the world.

A blockaded Cuba, virtually without resources from the material point of view, but led by Fidel and constructed by its people, has entered the 21st century in a social situation that is the envy of the Latin American and Caribbean peoples. There are differences here that will remain in history and are already sown in the judgement of history.

A few decades ago Fidel said: “History will absolve me;” hence the book of the same name. You have an infinite face, gigantic before the history of our peoples, and nobody will ever be able to take you from there, Fidel.

At the end of the 1980s Fidel stated that a new revolutionary wave of peoples would be unleashed in the continent when it seemed—as certain deluded persons pointed out—that we had reached the end of history, that history was petrified and that there were no other ways or alternatives other than the neoliberal model of brute capitalism, the false democracy implanted in those nations.

When many people began to yield and give in, Fidel continued saying that new waves would come. We are witnessing the beginning of those new waves.

In all of this Latin America the peoples are once again rising up in a wave of distinct tendencies, but in the end a popular wave, which is beginning to shift the old structures of domination on the continent.

Neruda was right when he said: “Bolívar awakes every 100 years when the peoples awake.” We are inscribed and together in that wave and

in that struggle. Together we will make it possible. United, as Bolívar said, we will be invincible.

These are reasons enough to be optimistic on your 75th birthday. Entering this 21st century with our heads on high, with our morale high, laden with dreams, laden with fortitude, laden with faith, laden with hope.

My brother, *¡Hasta la Victoria Siempre!* (Even Onward to Victory!). And may you spend very many more years among us, giving demonstrations of that integrity that you have given all your life, giving demonstrations of courage, of example and impelling, as always, the waves of the peoples. Congratulations, my brother!

## 20TH CENTURY QUIXOTE

IGOR IVANOV, RUSSIAN

MINISTER OF FOREIGN RELATIONS

Cuba is a state with international prestige, despite efforts to isolate it, above all on the part of the United States, which nobody has been able to achieve. Fidel Castro is one of the last Quixotes of the 20th century and moreover, he is in very good physical shape and actively participates in the life and politics of his country.

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## PRINCIPAL AUTHOR

### BRAZILIAN INTELLECTUALS

The presence of Fidel Castro in Brazil is an opportunity to recall Cuba's great achievements attained by a generation that abolished misery and illiteracy, established a healthcare system and guaranteed the population equal opportunities, thus allowing the previously dispossessed classes a more human life until then unknown in Latin America. In the person of Fidel Castro, the principal author of this work, we salute the Cuban people who have understood how to maintain their ideals with such firmness.

## DREAM MAKERS

### CUBAN INTELLECTUALS

We wish everyone to know that we, Cuban writers and artists, and also dream makers, are with Fidel now and always.

## A HUMANIST

JACK NICHOLSON, U.S. ACTOR

I have talked with Fidel about everything, of life, of culture. Fidel is a genius and a humanist and I believe that he never wanted to break with us (the United States). Cubans are very open and have no hostility at all against the U.S. people.

## CURRENT OF SYMPATHY

JACQUES DUCLOS, FORMER GENERAL SECRETARY  
OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF FRANCE

The name of Fidel Castro is known to all French people and the Cuban Revolution is surrounded by a current of sympathy developing in parallel with the anti-U.S. current. This is, in one way, the French translation of the Cuban people's words of command: "Cuba *sí*, Yankees *no!*"



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## THEY SHOULD BE CONGRATULATED

JAMES WOLFENSOHN, BORN IN AUSTRALIA,  
A NATURALIZED U.S. CITIZEN, PRESIDENT  
OF THE WORLD BANK

I believe—and everyone would agree—that Cuba has undertaken good work in education and health. They should be congratulated for what they have done.

## A VERY SPECIAL MAN

JAVIER GRASS, SPANISH COMPOSER  
AND MUSICIAN

I recall in my youth that photograph in which Hemingway appears with Fidel. From that time I have always nursed the desire to know personally the *Comandante*: that very special man. I took the first step when I came to live in this beautiful country with its out-of-the-ordinary people. Then, living here, I saw him pass by in his car and that dream of meeting him came closer.

Fidel is a man who is close to his people, marches alongside them, talks with them and lives alongside them. Moreover, he suffers with them and, far from distancing himself, comes closer every day to their needs, their daily problems.

It is admirable how he takes care that his people should enrich itself spiritually, that he calls for retraining and battles to raise the cultural level of all Cubans. This would be unthinkable in any other part of the world.

His valor and courage in the face of powerful enemies in the defense of what he considers just should be highlighted, as is the case with his brother Raúl, likewise a revolutionary with an impressive history who, with that humility of the great, sometimes moves discreetly among us.

Fate and certain friends saw to it that my dream of meeting Fidel became a reality one night at the Hotel Nacional. Seeing him walking through the lobby I approached him, greeted him and embraced him. I felt him as a superior being and in the midst of my emotion only managed to say: "My *Comandante*, it is an honor for me to be able to shake your hand." He regarded me with that penetrating look and I perceived on his part a simple and sincere gesture of affection.

I had just greeted an honest, valiant and sensitive man. One of the greatest statesmen of the 20th century. The father of the Cuban people.

## A BOOK

JEAN BERTRAND ARISTIDES,  
PRESIDENT OF HAITI

Fidel Castro is a book.

## THE PEOPLES' HOPE

J. J. SERVAN SCHREIBER, FRENCH JOURNALIST

All French people who have maintained the ideal of social justice in their hearts profoundly recognize in Fidel Castro and in the Cuban people the rare example that they have given of heroism in combat and dignity in victory.

Cuba's message to the world proves that military force in the service of the privileged always comes to an end, because it is no more than the appearance of force. That was the message of Christ, of the French Revolution, of American Independence and, finally, of the battleship *Potemkin*.

Today it is the honor of the Cubans, in this time of great development, to be the inheritors of the imperishable hope of the peoples.

## ONE OF HIS SOLDIERS

JOAQUÍN BALAGUER, INTELLECTUAL,  
POLITICIAN, FORMER PRESIDENT  
OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

My relations with Cuba have been very cordial. They have primarily developed in the sporting and cultural fields. Many Dominicans travel to Cuba in search of health, visit hospitals, maintain very good relations with Cuban families and there is a constant exchange between the two countries. We do not have diplomatic relations with Cuba for obvious reasons. But it is impossible to separate two countries that are so united by history, with such powerful historical ties, not only on account of José Martí's action here in the epoch of his battle for Cuban liberation, but on account of the profound mark that he left during his visits to our country. Fidel Castro has in me one of his soldiers, a fervent admirer and a man identified with his ideas.

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## BOLÍVAR'S LEGACY

JOHN F. KENNEDY, INTELLECTUAL, POLITICIAN,  
FORMER U.S. PRESIDENT

Fidel Castro is part of the legacy of Bolívar. We should have given the fiery and youthful rebel a warmer welcome at his hour of victory.

## A HOPE

JOHN WILLIAM COOKE, ARGENTINE,  
PERONIST LEADER

Cuba is a signal and Fidel Castro is a hope.

## PRAYING FOR HIM

POPE JOHN XXIII

Ambassador, tell my dear son (Fidel) from me to resist, that the Holy Father is praying for him and for Cuba.

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## BORN OF THE PEOPLE

JORGE AMADO, BRAZILIAN WRITER

Because he was born of the people and remains in the midst of the people, his grandeur is that of the Cuban people. Everything that he has done, all his actions, make concrete the highest aspirations of the José Martí's homeland. The peace in which I believe is not and will not be divorced from justice, from freedom, from the hope of a better world, and Fidel embodies all that.

## IMPOSSIBLE TO DISHEARTEN HIM

JORGE RICARDO MASETTI, ARGENTINE JOURNALIST AND REVOLUTIONARY

Visits to dozens of timber shacks, equally perforated by bullets; the lamentation of women and children and of men surprised and beaten before they could exercise a minimal reaction in defense of their homes, had accelerated in the *Comandante* an explosion of his whole capacity for reaction. I was able to confirm at that time why Fidel Castro, shattered by the *Granma*

landing, entire months without food in the face of campesino indifference, obliged to take up guerrilla warfare due to a lack of arms with which to fight, continued growing in Cuba, on the continent and in a large part of the world. It was impossible to dishearten him.

## I CANNOT CONCEIVE

JORGE TIMOSSI, ARGENTINE-CUBAN JOURNALIST  
AND WRITER

Living in the time and space of Fidel constitutes the essential, the principal and privileged axis of my life. I cannot conceive of an existence without Fidel. Simply because as a statesman and human being he integrates ethics and truth, courage, constant tenacity, the finest, most qualified and universal of the art of politics, and an integral culture incomparable with any other contemporary statesman.

His elevated mental stature and even his acknowledged physical resistance have revealed him as an inescapable phenomenon impregnating his vast ideals made concrete and those of the future in individuals like me and in multitudes

in our country and the world. Living through Fidel, meditating and re-meditating on his ideas is something like an attainable joy.

## A MAN OF CONVICTIONS

JOSÉ BONO, POLITICIAN, PRESIDENT  
OF THE AUTONOMOUS GOVERNMENT  
OF CASTILLA-LA-MANCHA, SPAIN

Fidel is a man firmly convinced of what he is doing, a patriot who is working for his people, who has a very high concept of sovereignty and, above all, of the defense of national interests that have so often being threatened or blocked.

## IMPACT ON HISTORY

JOSÉ FIGUERES FERRER, INTELLECTUAL,  
POLITICIAN, FORMER PRESIDENT OF COSTA RICA

Fidel Castro is one of the international figures to have had the greatest impact on me due to his charisma. We had differences with Fidel that have lessened now and we are good friends. A few months ago I was invited to Cuba and



talked with him for more than nine hours. Among the things he told me was that while Reagan is in the U.S. Government, relations between that country and Cuba are going to be impossible. And I think that he is right. Moreover, I am one hundred percent in agreement with the thesis that he sets out in his book *Crisis económica y social del mundo* [World Economic and Social Crisis].

One can be in agreement with him or not, but Fidel has made an impact on history.

## ONE OF THE GREAT STATESMEN

JOSÉ LÓPEZ PORTILLO, INTELLECTUAL,  
POLITICIAN, FORMER PRESIDENT OF MEXICO

Fidel Castro is one of the great figures of this century. His rebellion, in the small ambit in which it happened, was stimulating. It became the paradigm of the contemporary generation, ashamed of opulence, absurd and aimless wars, its contrasts and injustices. He was a kind of barbed pointer of critical awareness. Admired by me as one of the important and key men in terms of understanding this 20th century.

A paradigmatic Fidel in his century, author of the independence that has restored dignity to his island; an irreplaceable governor and the guiding force of a revolution in ascent.

In short, Castro's intelligence, culture and personality facilitated my relationship with him. I recall Castro as one of the great statesmen that I have had the privilege to know.

## VERY PROFOUNDLY

JOSÉ MARÍA VELASCO IBARRA, FORMER  
PRESIDENT OF ECUADOR

Fidel Castro is a man who has comprehended very profoundly the present hour of humanity and who has dedicated himself to it with valor, with heroic valor, with constancy, with sacrifice, with effort, by living dangerously, in the only way in which human beings can aggrandize and glorify their lives: by constantly, heroically and dangerously serving humanity.

He has dedicated himself to living dangerously in order to redeem his people from poverty, servitude and unjust interventions.

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## WIDE-RANGING KNOWLEDGE

JOSÉ MIGUEL INSULZA, CHILEAN POLITICIAN

I visited Cuba for the first time in 1963, aged twenty. On that occasion I came to know Fidel Castro and Che Guevara personally. After that I met with the Cuban president on different occasions. They have been very frank and pleasant encounters. We have talked for hours on numerous subjects. He possesses a wide-ranging knowledge of what is occurring in Chile and in all the Latin American countries.

Since my first meeting with him thirty-three years have gone by. He has always maintained the same position on a whole conjuncture of subjects and that is very interesting. He has a great capacity for grasping new phenomena, new things. His information on international politics and economic knowledge are surprising.

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## FIRMLY IN THE SADDLE

JOSÉ MIGUEL IRRISARI, CUBAN LAWYER  
AND ECONOMIST

I was one of the members of the five-person junta that ruled Cuba for five days after the fall of Gerardo Machado in August 1933. The situation was handled by the U.S. ambassador Sumner Welles. The U.S. Navy maintained thirty warships at anchor facing Havana. The U.S. Government always did whatever it felt like in our country. They were the ones in control. They installed and removed presidents. It is sickening to talk of that period. That is why there was always the need for a Revolution in Cuba and men like Fidel Castro who would stay firmly in the saddle and not take orders from the United States.

## HE BEAT US

JOSÉ PARDO LLADA, JOURNALIST AND POLITICIAN  
OF CUBAN ORIGIN LOCATED IN COLOMBIA

I always remember that in 1952 Javier Lezcano, a friend of mine and of Castro, said to me:

“Pardo, how mistaken you are. You don’t realize that Fidel is a historical figure.” I laughed. Now thirty-six years have passed—1988—and I have to acknowledge that Lezcano was right.

I cannot avoid people constantly reminding me of Castro. A few days ago Amparo Grisales, the most popular artist in Colombia, returned from Havana and talked wonders of her meeting with him.

Something similar happened to me recently with the Ecuadoran President Rodrigo Borja, who commented to me that Castro had excelled in his visit to Quito.

It surprises people that a man with so much power and so much intervention in political life can be so spontaneous. Castro meets up with one person or another and immediately creates a pleasing atmosphere for him or her. That is another of his powerful weapons.

My friend General Juan Domingo Perón used to say that no one escapes his destiny. I cannot escape that past. I cannot escape a past that is here: good or bad, but here. That carries weight. Those photos of mine with Castro that you have seen in my living room are recollections of a period in my life which I have never regretted and will never regret. That is part of my life.

For me Castro and Che are two figures that have gone down in history.

Despite political differences I feel an admiration for Castro. I cannot deny that. In our hearts, we Cubans who were his friends remember that stage as a gratifying memory, but with nostalgia. We couldn't forget it even if we wanted to.

Castro beat us; there is no doubt about that. He beat us by a long way in the race; but I have never felt hatred or resentment of him.

How am I going to negate someone that I applauded and supported at a specific moment of my life? Other people don't recognize that. There they are, each one with his burden of hatred or happiness.

Do you think I could forget the occasion when he was visiting my house waiting for me to return from doing a radio program and my wife, who was pregnant, started haemorrhaging, and it was Fidel who picked her up, took her to hospital, and saved her life. That cannot be forgotten. That is here. That is part of my life.

I'm going to confess something to you: for me, just like for you, he also continues being Fidel.

## DETERMINATION TO WIN

JOSÉ RAMÓN FERNÁNDEZ, CUBAN GENERAL  
AND POLITICIAN

It is Fidel that set in motion the ideas of liberty, sovereignty and social justice that for well over one century were generated in different parts of Cuba by a mix of nationals of Spanish origin, freed men, slaves and also some people from the peninsula.

Those ideas were clearly demonstrated in the war of 1868 and later, taken up and developed by the genius of Martí, by the creation of the Cuban Revolutionary Party and the organization of the war initiated on February 24, 1895, whose outcome was frustrated by the U.S. intervention of 1898.

It was in the second half of the last century that Fidel took all those antecedents as the ideal of struggle, united wills, organized and put into action that movement conceived of by Martí, which definitively defeated the dictatorship, decapitated the bourgeois state and its institutions and liberated us from being a dependency of U.S. imperialism.

From 1953 to date Fidel's total dedication has been made public. With his intelligence,

wisdom, political understanding, perspicacity and valor he has led Cuba to wage this battle in which the strength is in the hands of the adversary, but the intelligence, courage and determination to win is the heritage of this people headed by him.

Not for centuries, or in the present period has there been such a colossal battle against imperialism as that waged by the Cuban people led by Fidel.

There is no other leader that has effected a feat comparable to that undertaken by Fidel.

For all the above, as he predicted in his words of defense before the court that tried him for the assault on the Moncada Garrison, history has absolved him.

## MORE SOLID THAN A ROCK

JOSÉ SARAMAGO, PORTUGUESE WRITER, NOBEL  
LITERATURE PRIZE LAUREATE

Fidel Castro embodies the heroism of the Cuban people... If it were not for the will of the Cuban people and the will of Fidel Castro, Cuba could not live. Cuba is more solid than a rock,



because rocks are gradually eroded and that is not occurring in Cuba.

## SACRED SON OF THE HOMELAND

JUAN ALMEIDA BOSQUE, MAJOR  
OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

Fidel is the only figure of whom I speak with adjectives and superlatives.

Every century has its person who goes down in history, and the 20th century is that of Fidel Castro Ruz.

I am not accustomed to identifying him by his surnames, I say them out of the love, warmth and affection that he always had for his parents.

In the 19th century we admired Martí, that was his century as a politician, poet and writer and his fall in combat. With him, we admire Céspedes, the Maceos, Gómez, Agramonte, Serafín Sánchez, Flor Crombet<sup>4</sup> and other patriots,

4. Carlos Manuel de Céspedes (1819-74)—known as the Father of the Homeland—; Antonio Maceo y Grajales (1845-96), his father and brothers; Ignacio Agramonte y Loynaz (1841-73); Serafín Sánchez (1876-96); and Flor Crombet (1850-95), fighters for Cuban independence during the wars of the 19th century. *Ed.*

but the 20th century is Fidel's. He will go down in history as the sacred son of the homeland.

I am honoured to have known him personally in 1952 and, from then onwards, to have shared with him all these years during which I have seen him increase his stature as the undisputed chief, exceeding the confines of the homeland to acquire international stature.

Fidel dignified humankind, gave blacks and women their place. At his side I have never felt like a mere black. He has a great love for children and an infinite confidence in youth.

I do not believe it is necessary to say anything else; the great do not need many words.

## HIGHEST LEVEL

JUAN ANTONIO SAMARANCH, SPANIARD,  
PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL  
OLYMPIC COMMITTEE

Cuba is helping many nations, which demonstrates that a little country can also have a sporting conduct at the highest level. There is no doubt that sports in Cuba are not just going well but very well, and President Fidel Castro

has played an outstanding role in that by applying the correct policy that sports begins in schools and is practiced en masse.

## HE HASN'T FALLEN FROM THE SKIES

JUAN BOSCH, WRITER, POLITICIAN, FORMER  
PRESIDENT OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Fidel Castro hasn't fallen from the skies. He embodies the latest episode of a political process that is in ascent.

Latin America has given us three political geniuses: Toussaint L'Ouverture, Simón Bolívar and Fidel Castro; and I should say that that is a lot to give, because political geniuses don't arise just like that. Humboldt had anticipated that when, at the beginning of the 19th century, after a tour of America, he commented that the two most politicised places were Caracas and Havana; in other words, Venezuela and Cuba.

We are in the midst of a historical rupture, of a change from one society into another, as occurred when capitalism replaced feudalism, when feudalism replaced slavery. Due to the fact



that we are in that historical rupture, the United States was mistaken with Fidel; it was also mistaken with Ho Chi Minh and will continue being more and more and more mistaken.

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## THE GREAT VIRTUE

JUAN DOMINGO PERÓN, GENERAL, POLITICIAN,  
FORMER PRESIDENT OF ARGENTINA

That intense penetration—the United States—after World War II in our continent, in all countries, for good or for bad. When countries do not yield or it cannot penetrate them, it arranges a coup d'état or installs an obedient government.

The great virtue that I see in the Cuban Revolution and Fidel's action is precisely that; he has placed a dyke there that it has not been able to cross. What has been the cost of associating itself with Russia? It doesn't matter. With the devil, provided that you don't fall. Because the devil, you know? Moreover it's a bit ethereal. On the other hand, these are real.

## HE HAD THE GOSPELS IN MIND

JUAN EMILIO FRIGULS, CUBAN JOURNALIST

I am of the belief that a genuine image of Fidel's influence in terms of the Church, including his concept and evaluation of the Gospels, has yet to be written.

When he said: "To betray the poor is to betray Christ," he had the Gospels in mind.

## NOT A SECOND OF VACILLATION

JUAN MARINELLO, CUBAN INTELLECTUAL AND  
POLITICIAN

The triumph and consolidation of the Cuban Revolution is due to the presence of a man like Fidel. Marxism, which is above all a profoundly humane doctrine, does not deny the importance of a human being as an interpreter and, I would say, as a leader of a historical process, with an exceptional vision, as is the case with Martí, as is the case with Fidel, the case with Lenin and the great figures that have led an important social transformation.

There is not the slightest doubt that Fidel is a highly notable figure of our times and has an undeniable historical category.

The extraordinary destiny to be the man who has installed a new way of life on a continent—socialism—has fallen on him. That is a profile which gives him an absolute historical category of the greatest importance.

Moreover, of course, he has the great virtue of having been able to undertake a task of such importance with an amazing mastery, with both a political and revolutionary meaning.

We could say: it is the same thing. No, it is not exactly the same. These terms have much in common, much similitude, many relations, but one understands as revolutionary a person who unleashes great historical processes and undertakes, in virtue of them, great transformations.

A politician is a man who knows how to govern circumstances with the skill that the moment demands so that his major objectives triumph.

Fidel has those characteristics that, in truth, are shared by great historical figures in the field of Revolution. It is interesting to note that a man like Lenin, a man like Martí possessed that double condition. In other words: the power to see great historical panoramas, to successfully look toward the future. At the same time, a great quality for immediate practical work, which is called politics.

Fidel has done that in a magisterial way. That combination of the two elements is in good part due to his stature, which can in no way be

diminished. Fidel remains as one of the great men of our time and, in America, as a man of higher destiny, presupposed by having had the power to develop a revolutionary movement that is giving an entire continent a new epoch. Cuba today is the mirror and the future of all Latin American peoples.

He is a man who has the circumstances and the condition to be at the center of this process, as his immortality is already assured due to his exceptional qualities of leadership, for the exceptional function of having installed in nothing less than an entire continent a new system that is much more humane and much more satisfying to life: Socialism.

In that field, he assumes a great objective, a present and future figure for all the Latin American nations. Cuba is not only the image of Latin America, but the symbol of the American future.

Fidel has represented something unique. He has represented the presence of a new continent in the field of a revolution as profound as socialism.

That is what gives him the widest significance in that field. Moreover, one has to add that all the virtues conforming his personality have naturally enriched not only Cuba but socialism in



general, given that there are certain interpretations and visions that have also upset others. Here is his impressive significance.

Fidel is a man of accurate and special visions in many moments of his life. But when I refer to the great significance of his attitude during the 1962 Missile Crisis, I refer to it in the same context as Che would judge it.

In other words, bearing in mind that he was confronting what was definitely the problem of greatest international magnitude in his whole political life. The Missile Crisis could have unleashed a universal crisis and even a great war. We are all absolutely in agreement on that.

This was one of the moments at which he expressed his immense stature. For having handled a situation that could have been extremely grave not only for Cuba but for the whole world with such dignity and, at the same time, with so much political talent.

He was able to manage that problem, as Che stated in his famous farewell letter. He has experienced many difficult moments and has been obliged to make difficult decisions and has always done so in a very intelligent manner. But at that moment the problem had a greater magnitude.

Fidel has never broken—that is one of his personal and most private merits—that daily and sustained link with the people's needs.

He will meet equally with statesmen and people on the street. That is a particularly wonderful condition, also very American and very Cuban, we could say. Yes, in Europe there is a distinct way of seeing things, but Fidel is a very Latin American person and, above all, very Cuban.

His temperament inclines him towards understanding popular needs, from a daily and ongoing experience with the people, and that gives him a hierarchy and distinct condition. There is no doubt about that.

Only a man like Fidel could have channelled a phenomenon as difficult as he found at the triumph of the Revolution, and arrived at a veritable unity. Only a man like him could have achieved that. That is one of Fidel's great virtues.

One sets about regarding other American leaders, and no... no... no. That way Fidel has of saying: "If this man is useful and has worked, he has my support; it's not important where he comes from."

The phenomenon had to be difficult. In Europe things occurred in different ways. In Europe the communist parties came to power with the support of the Soviet Union.

Here power was conquered without any type of external aid, and only someone of his mental capacity could have led such a process without great violence or difficulties. Because it can be said today that we are the most united party in the Americas.

That, in a country like ours, where people are so impassioned, is very important. That is not something one sees every day. Generally speaking, you can see valiant leaders in Latin America, but almost always very defensive of their little group, which is prejudicial to those countries.

He is a man who does not allow himself to be beaten by any feud or any recommendation against anyone. He says: "Anyone who has a clean revolutionary sheet, from whatever generation, whatever party he or she has been a member of, is a useful person."

I have seen him do that. I know him very well. It is very difficult to find a leader like Fidel. It is very difficult.

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## UNIQUE EXPERIENCE

JUAN PABLO LETELIER MOREL, POLITICIAN,  
MEMBER OF THE CHILEAN CONGRESS AND  
PRESIDENT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION  
OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION (UIP)

At the beginning of this year, 2001, I made my first journey to Cuba. On that occasion I met Fidel Castro. It was a unique personal experience, not just for coming face to face with a part of history—and that is a fortune possessed by the Cubans—he is not only a part of the history of Cuba; he is a part of the history of humanity.

I feel an admiration and an exceptional respect for what Fidel is, for Cuba and for the Third World nations, and particularly for Latin America. I am not going to conceal the fact that I consider him an exceptional man.

## THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN FRIENDS

JULIAN MAYFIELD, U.S. NOVELIST

Inevitably, Abraham Lincoln and Fidel Castro would have been great friends. I doubt that

Lincoln has much in common with General Eisenhower. Lincoln would have felt at ease in the streets of Havana, but would be a stranger in Washington.

## SCULPTOR OF THE REVOLUTION

JULIO CORTÁZAR, ARGENTINE WRITER

Fidel is a man who is shaping the Revolution in itself, concerning its direction, orientation and physiognomy. It is evident that for the majority of the Cuban people that, apart from his qualities, his effectiveness as a leader, he is already a symbol acquiring extra-human value, beyond the everyday. When you hear the word Fidel on the lips of a child, an adult, in addition to its direct value, it has a series of resonances like harmonica music that touches the fibers of sensibility and awareness. Fidel is the sculptor of the Cuban Revolution.

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## AN EXCEPTIONAL MAN

KENNETH KAUNDA, MAJOR, POLITICIAN,  
PRESIDENT OF ZAMBIA

Cuba, an exceptional nation led by an exceptional man: Fidel Castro.

## AN EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME

KEVIN COSTNER, U.S. ACTOR

Seeing my latest film, *13 Days*, at the side of Fidel Castro was an experience of a lifetime. It was very emotional to sit down beside him and watch him relive an experience he had as a young man, and to see how John F. Kennedy, another young man, also suffered in that dramatic situation. Cuba is a great actor on the world stage, in spite of being a little country. Who are we in the United States to say that we are right and they've got it wrong in Cuba?

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## MORE THAN CHARISMA

KIRBY JONES, U.S. JOURNALIST  
AND ENTREPRENEUR

Fidel Castro is one of most charming and jovial men that one could ever meet. Whether one is in agreement with him or not, Castro is personally irresistible. U.S. political writers would say that it's a simple case of charisma, but it is more than that. Political leaders can be and are charismatic in their public conduct, but very ordinary in private moments. That is not the case with Fidel Castro. He continues being one of the few authentically electrifying figures in a world in which his colleagues seem dull and pedestrian.

## PROUD TO VISIT IT

KOFFI ANNAN, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION (UN)

The nations of the South should play a more active role in world problems, but achieving that depends on our efforts, on what we do and what we help others to do.

A poor country does not have to leave its people defenceless in the face of the difficulties life imposes on it, and that is the case with Cuba, a country that I feel proud to visit.

## THE REVOLUTION IS GROWING

LÁZARO CÁRDENAS, POLITICIAN, FORMER  
PRESIDENT OF MEXICO

The sister people of Cuba and its maximum leader Fidel Castro are maintaining a heroic political and moral attitude in defense of their economic liberation, their integrity and their sovereignty.

In the face of the ignoble arguments wielded by the enemies of the Cuban Revolution, sympathy and solidarity with their cause—the same cause for which the peoples of all Latin America are struggling—are growing in the heart of the peoples of our continent.



## PROFOUND THOUGHT

LÁZARO FARIÑAS, CUBAN JOURNALIST AND  
COMMENTATOR LOCATED IN MIAMI

I was barely eleven years old when I first heard the name of Fidel Castro. It was in the epoch of the assault on the Moncada Garrison. In spite of the fact that that heroic action enormously impressed me, I have never come to feel myself his supporter. Moreover, during the 1960s I considered him my adversary. With the passing of the years, and as my thinking on the Revolution, on this man and his relations with the United States has matured, I have come to the conclusion that, without a figure like Fidel, the dream of our 19th century independence fighters would have remained just that, a dream. You can be Fidel Castro's enemy, adversary, friend or admirer, but what you cannot be is indifferent to him. From the few moments that I have shared with him I have realized that he is an untiring conversationalist, a man of exceptional charisma and extremely profound thought. He has definitively entered, like a meteorite, into the history of Cuba and has stayed there for years as its principal actor.

I am sure that after his death he will remain impregnated in it for ever. Some will try to condemn him and others to absolve him, but nobody will have the authority to wrest from Fidel the flag of sovereignty and the independence of our nation, which he has maintained on high, come hell or high water, in these difficult and hard times through which our people have traversed at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries.

## HIS IMAGE

LEE LOCKWOOD, U.S. JOURNALIST

Fidel Castro, the tempestuous and charismatic fomenter and sustained motor force of the Cuban Revolution, is a man indispensable to his country who supplies energy in almost all aspects of contemporary Cuban life.

Despite constant assassination attempts he scorns precautions and impulsively mixes with the masses in all parts of the island, to the distress of his bodyguards.

Castro's Revolution has undertaken certain undeniable reforms affecting the lives of campes-

nos and the proletariat. It has literally erased illiteracy, it has proportioned free education and medical attention to everybody, it has instituted a review of land ownership and rental in search of improved living standards for the masses.

Castro is too great; his image dominates Cuba. For bad or for good, he is contemporary Cuba.

## SOLID AXIS

LEONEL BRIZOLA, BRAZILIAN POLITICIAN

For us the Cuban Revolution was a solid axis that allowed us to act. The example of Fidel Castro was with us in exile and he was very comprehensive of and in solidarity with our difficulties.

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## CLEAR COMPREHENSION

LEONID BREZHNEV, FORMER SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION

Fidel clearly comprehended the desires and needs of his people. The grandeur of the feat undertaken by Fidel is likewise located in the fact that he knew how to determine the right road for the development of a free Cuba. Latin American peoples and those on other continents are aware of the name of the leader of the Cuban Socialist Revolution: Fidel Castro.

## ARDENT HEART

LEONID KUCHMA, POLITICIAN, PRESIDENT OF UKRAINE

The Ukrainian people appreciate the fact that the ardent heart of the respected *Comandante* Fidel Castro was not indifferent to its tragedy.<sup>5</sup>

5. He refers to the worst nuclear accident to date at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the Ukraine on April 26, 1986.  
*Ed.*

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## WE ARE IRON-WILLED

LIBER SEREGNI, GENERAL, POLITICIAN,  
PRESIDENT OF THE BROAD FRONT  
OF URUGUAY

What we Latin Americans ask for is comprehension of Cuba, because one cannot pontificate from the position of stable democracies and pose ideal solutions for a country that processed its revolutionary change and has been blockaded and harassed for thirty years by the empire in power, which has done everything to prevent its unfettered development and even to concoct assassination plots against President Fidel Castro. Above anything else, we ask for solidarity with the Cuban people and their process, and non-intervention. In this we are iron-willed. The Cuban people themselves have to be left to process their present and their future. This solidarity with the Cuban people does not mean that we support and share their system.

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## THEY WOULD APPLAUD

LOUIS FARRAKHAN, U.S. CITIZEN  
AND PRESIDENT OF THE NATION  
OF ISLAM ORGANIZATION

Cuba has the right to be itself, to determine its own system of government. The Cuban people should not lose hope or faith, because victory is for those that endure and resist until the end. This is a great nation and if the U.S. people really knew what was happening in Cuba, they would applaud the Revolution and President Fidel Castro.

## A GENEROUS PERSON

LUCIUS WALKER, U.S. REVEREND, LEADER  
OF PASTORS FOR PEACE

There is no doubt that Fidel Castro continues to be the first statesman of the planet. He is a great man and a person of generous spirit.

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## THE FIRST VOICE

LUIS CORVALÁN, POLITICIAN, FORMER GENERAL  
SECRETARY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY  
OF CHILE

Thank you, comrade Fidel, for your opportune call to save my life. That was the first voice raised in the world calling for solidarity, to save my life and the lives of other Chilean political prisoners.

## HE WILL PASS INTO HISTORY

LUIS ECHEVERRÍA, POLITICIAN, FORMER  
PRESIDENT OF MEXICO

Fidel Castro is going to pass into history together with Bolívar and Martí. He has been an exceptional political leader and had a great vision of the independence of his country from a very young age. He is something like a predestined person. He has upset all attempts on his life. He has been much attacked for specific characteristics of the Cuban regime. If it were not for this regime, which can be criticized from many

points of view, Cuba's sovereignty would be greatly endangered. A U.S. project for expansion into Cuba has existed from the beginning of the 19th century, before we lost half of our territory to the United States. I believe that with Fidel Castro or without Fidel Castro Cuba's policy in international and internal terms should continue to be the same. Hopefully it will be with Castro for many years.

## HE HAS SOMETHING SPECIAL

LUIS IGNACIO DA SILVA, "LULA," BRAZILIAN  
POLITICIAN, PRESIDENT OF BRASIL

A politician like Fidel Castro who has maintained his leadership intact and the respect his people feel for him untouchable for forty years, has something special.



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SUCH A GREAT WEIGHT  
OF HISTORY

LUIS ORTEGA, JOURNALIST OF CUBAN ORIGIN  
LOCATED IN THE UNITED STATES

Fidel Castro has already exceeded history, he is already invulnerable. He is a legend of fabulous times, a myth. Many people want to touch him to see if he is real. When he glides along a corridor slowly, measuring his step, a little bit in slow motion, as myths always move, it is not that he is sick or that anything hurts him, but that he already bears such a great weight of history on his shoulders that he has had to renounce the agility of his early years.

The image that he projects on the world is much better than the one he had in the initial years of the Revolution. His international prestige has grown since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The image of Castro is sacrosanct. History has already absolved him.

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## ONE OF THE GREAT LEADERS

LUIS SUÁREZ, MEXICAN, PRESIDENT OF THE  
LATIN AMERICAN JOURNALISTS FEDERATION  
(FELAP)

Cuban President Fidel Castro is a leader of history, above all a statesman who managed politics and diplomacy without ever isolating himself from the wisdom of the people.

My appreciation of Fidel Castro has grown as his leadership has advanced. Fidel is one of the greatest leaders of history since classical times.

## THE LATIN AMERICAN OF THE CENTURY

MANUEL CABIESES DONOSO, JOURNALIST,  
DIRECTOR OF THE CHILEAN MAGAZINE *PUNTO  
FINAL*

Fidel Castro is “the Latin American of the century,” even though our continent is not lacking in admirable men and women. But, through his work—the Cuban Revolution—Fidel is the one

to have attained the greatest influence over the longest period. He is a patriot of this still dis-united Latin America and a powerful voice for the victims of capitalism.

It is not easy to talk of Fidel because the risk of falling into a dithyramb—which he does not need—is very great. However, it has to be said that there are very few like him who have converted their own lives into history.

Fidel simultaneously belongs to the past and the present in which he remains current and valid. This is doubtless due to his ideas that will also reach into the future. He is a man of flesh and blood and a legend at the same time. This makes it difficult to make a value judgement that keeps emotion in line. He is someone who perturbs friends and enemies. I have been with him on three or four occasions with an opportunity for dialogue.

Although I consider him a close and affectionate friend, that vision of a living legend has impeded me from taking advantage of the warmth of his behavior. I belong to the generation that received the influence of the Cuban Revolution most strongly and I am grateful for that.

We owe him ethical values that prompted us to take one option in life. Fidel and his Revolution taught us to elude the snares of dogmatism, to persist in ideas of unity, to defend principles by constantly recreating the revolutionary tactic.

I believe that the present generation has assimilated the ideological heritage of the Cuban Revolution. We are living in a new epoch in which young people are calling on original forms to organize their forces and prepare themselves for the new battles for social justice.

A system of ideas conforming what is valid in the past and the incorporation of the wealth of new experiences is beginning to be born. It is the legitimate rebel and creative heritage of Fidel and the men and women—Abel,<sup>6</sup> Che, Camilo, Celia, Haydée and all the Cuban people—who share the glory of a memorable feat of human dignity.

6. Abel Santamaría Cuadrado (1927-53), second in command in the assault on the Moncada Garrison, after which he was savagely murdered. *Ed.*

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## IMPORTANCE OF SCIENCE

MANUEL ELKIN PATARROYO, COLOMBIAN  
SCIENTIST

I am inspired by a profound admiration that Cuba has a state policy in relation to science and that somebody like Fidel Castro has understood its importance since the triumph of the Revolution and at the early age of thirty-three.

## SYMBOL OF INDEPENDENCE

MANUEL FRAGA, SPANISH POLITICIAN,  
PRESIDENT OF THE JUNTA OF GALICIA

Beyond ideological differences, and we have never denied them, Fidel Castro is one of the many symbols of this Hispanic world that was so many times glorious, divided, unjustly scorned and is a symbol of independence.

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## ARCHITECT OF A REVOLUTION

MARÍA ASUNCIÓN MATEO, SPANISH WRITER

Although he doesn't like being told so, Fidel Castro is a living legend, the sole survivor of an earlier historical stage, the last revolutionary. The man who has turned the island into a bastion against the United States.

A man of imposing aspect, whose colossal physique—half mythological creature, half Michelangelo's Moses—has caused the United States sleepless nights, he is—hate him or love him, criticize him or praise him—one of the most unique and attractive characters.

It comes as a surprise to be with a human being who jokes with the simplicity of a Galician and is interested in the most ordinary problems, while having the historical certainty of being the architect of a Revolution that shook the world and changed the course of the Cuban people.

## OUR FELLOW NUMBER ONE

MARIO BENEDETTI, URUGUAYAN WRITER  
AND POET

Gathered thirty-six years ago on the Montevideo Municipal Esplanade to listen to a Fidel burning with triumph and just four months in power, perhaps experienced our own *caput obstipum* in registering more than a few casualties among those early enthusiasts now to be detected in the ranks of the ultraconservative right.

Thirty-six years later, who remembers Frondizi, Alessandri, López Mateos, Betancourt, Lleras Camargo, Luis Somoza and, *last but not least*, Eisenhower and other leaders of that period? On the other hand, Fidel is still present and coherent. On numerous occasions the ill-famed CIA attempted to assassinate him and, by a miracle, and despite the agency's demonstrated professionalism for political crimes, were unsuccessful in that specific mission. On the other hand, neither Eisenhower nor Kennedy nor Johnson nor Nixon nor Ford nor Carter nor Reagan nor Bush were able to do away with him either.

There is a revealing fact. Every time Fidel attends an international event, the reception given him by his hosts generally respects, with more or less cordiality, the basic elements of formal protocol, but his popular reception is always warm, enthusiastic and joyful. The peoples (excuse me for rescuing this word from disuse) have always acknowledged in the Cuban leader his obsession for justice, for self-determination, for the sovereignty of all nations, but also for solidarity with other nations.

At the end of this century, when selfishness and ignobleness (suffice it to mention the cases of Bosnia, Chechen, Rwanda, Somalia, etcetera) represent the most infamous aspects of international politics; names like Vado del Yeso, Òancachuzú, Maquela do Sombo or Ogaden continue to make up the solidarity geography of the Cuban Revolution, which never asked for anything in exchange for its sacrifice and its protection.

The role of Cuba is and continues to be very important for Latin America, because it is the first time that a country, still a small one, is rebelling against U.S. pressure.

So, Fidel has committed errors. Of course, but not in the social context. Not in the de-



fense and guarantee of his people's health and education. After all, what ruler hasn't been mistaken? Only that the rest are forgiven, but Castro's, never. At least Fidel's errors were never bought, negotiated, nor have been (as in so many cases in Europe and America) mere chapters of that Grand Corruption that has become the most important and influential transnational of this confusing end of century. When they occurred, if they did, his were poor errors.

Fidel is an individual with a special charisma that has not been lost in the midst of all his battling, as is sometimes the case even with figures on the revolutionary left who, as time goes by, soon abdicate their decency and ethics. In his case, that charge cannot be made. Nobody has dared to accuse him of corruption or inappropriate luxuries in his life. He is the kind of person who, in making errors and getting things right, has wanted his people's well-being. That is to be respected.

I could not meet in this century and in the entire extension of our America any political figure like him who has placed his knowledge, experience, vitality, resistance and his own life, at the service of "the downtrodden."

It is also about being grateful for his drive, his sincerity, his humane qualities. I do not discount that one day we average Latin Americans will recoup our lost innocence and name him for once and for all our Fellow Number one.

At this point Fidel Castro is the most important political figure on the American continent and one of the most outstanding in contemporary history. The figure of Fidel continues to be an enlightening one.

## VIGOROUS LEADER

MARIO MOYA PALENCIA, MEXICAN POLITICIAN  
AND DIPLOMAT

Fidel Castro is a vigorous leader of peoples, a man of great clarity in terms of seeing the present and being alert to the future. He is a politician with great charisma.

One of the Cuban Revolution's greatest assets is its very leader, who is always sure of the terrain he steps on. I see in Fidel a great security in his people and in his destiny.

Fidel has already become a legend. You can disagree with his ideas, or his acts of govern-

ment—that is valid, as some of them are the object of controversy—but in no way can you erase what he signifies and has signified in the history of Latin America and the world.

## APTITUDES OF A GREAT LEADER

MARIO VÁZQUEZ RAÑA, MEXICAN  
ENTREPRENEUR

Without any doubt, President Fidel Castro is one of the greatest leaders in recent decades. We can be in agreement or not with his politics; but everyone recognizes in him the aptitudes of a great leader.

## SIMPLY STUPENDOUS

MARY HEMINGWAY, U.S. WRITER

Ernest [Hemingway] was always in favor of the Revolution. He was always in favor of Fidel. Anything else that has been said is part of the thousands of lies and insinuations that have been written about his person.

I have undertaken one of my greatest desires: to personally meet Fidel Castro. A simply stupendous man.

## HE SPEAKS THE TRUTH

MASSIMO D'ALEMA, ITALIAN POLITICIAN,  
GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT  
PARTY

Fidel Castro is listened to because he speaks the truth on the injustice and misery suffered by the peoples of the world.

## HE HAS NEVER BEEN AN ORDINARY MAN

MAX AZICRI, CUBAN ACADEMIC RESIDENT  
IN THE UNITED STATES

Fidel Castro's political skills are sophisticated and well known; he has a clear sense of what is advantageous for the Revolution and proceeds to execute it. For example, he has gratefully received the aid offered by Reverend Lucius Walker and the friendshipments sent by his ecu-

menical organization Pastors for Peace located in the United States in defiance of Washington's policy.

He also organized and facilitated the celebration in Cuba of the 14th Festival of Youth in 1997—another took place in 1978.

In both cases, Castro was acting in line with his rebel spirit, but always coordinating it with what was advantageous for the Revolution. He was the first to make contact with U.S. rebels and then with the representatives of international rebel youth. The same indignation and moral force that motivated him to attack the Moncada [Garrison] on July 26, 1953, now moved him to act in concert with equally rebellious fighters from other places.

Beyond purely domestic (national) questions, Castro has debated problems affecting the Americas, international relations, human and social rights, democracy, freedom of expression, social progress, economic development, the external debt, ecology and many other issues.

In the 1990s, exercising his charisma on the world scenario, he has become the spokesperson of the poor, of the mass of humanity that is usually ignored by the most powerful interests and political leaders. In this return to the international

arena, when many people viewed him as a leader of the past, Castro has dominated all the international meetings in which he has participated in recent years through the force of his personality.

It is known that Castro has a strong personality . . . and for that reason he has been called “dominant,” “authoritarian,” and other qualifications, but in spite of them his most severe critics have acknowledged his special quality of charming his interlocutors, the magnetism of attraction that his personality exercises when talking with him personally. Within any concept it cannot be said that Fidel Castro is an ordinary and everyday man, in reality he has never been so.

## ONE AGAINST ALL THE REST

MAX LESNICK, CUBAN JOURNALIST RESIDENT IN  
THE UNITED STATES

The end of the 1949 university course. Within the University of Havana there was a climate of violence and personal insecurity among the students as a result of the activities of gangster groups that, in the midst of a virtual war among

themselves, were turning the streets of the Cuban capital into bloodbaths with attacks and sub-machine gun bursts.

Control of the Federation of University Students (FEU) by means of intimidation was one of the objectives of those gangs that called themselves “revolutionaries.”

With that state of affairs, the 30th of September Committee against Gangsterism, an organization composed mainly of students from Eddy Chibás’ Orthodoxy Party<sup>7</sup> and the Socialist Youth was created. Given that it was about combating gunmen, the committee members could not carry guns. It was like walking to your death.

In the vanguard of that struggle against gangsterism were Baudilio Castellanos, Alfredo Guevara, Antonio Núñez Jiménez, Leonel Soto, Enrique Benavides, Walterio Carboneli, Fidel Castro and myself, all of us young students confronting the political and administrative corruption that was undermining Cuban society from the University.

7. Eduardo Chibás (1907-51) defended his stand against governmental corruption. His moral doctrine was deeply rooted in the people’s conscience. He founded the Cuban People’s (Orthodoxy) Party. *Ed.*

The public opinion was so repulsed by the gangsterism that President Prío's government had no alternative but to appear to take rectifying measures.

The solution from the Presidential Palace attempted to be one of Solomon's wisdom by offering public posts by the hundred to members of the gangs in exchange for them ceasing shoot-outs in the capital's streets.

That bungled scheme was called the Gang Pact. From that moment, intimidatory action by violent groups would be focused on students denouncing the excesses of the "authentic"<sup>8</sup> government from the Alma Mater.

But the protests didn't stop. The 30th of September Committee agreed to bring charges against the government and the gangsters in the Federation of University Students' assembly.

The meeting was convened in the Martyrs' Gallery, the location of portraits of university leaders who have fallen in combat for Cuba and the University. Julio Antonio Mella, Rafael

8. The Cuban Revolutionary Party (Authentic) was founded in 1934 by Ramón Grau San Martín as a reformist and nationalist organization. Initially, it received widespread support from the people, but the governments of Grau and Carlos Prío Socarrás disappointed the Cuban people on account of their servility to the United States, governmental corruption, etc. *Ed.*



Trejo and Tony Guiteras<sup>9</sup> were to serve as inspiration to the main speaker of that memorable afternoon: Fidel Castro.

It was the restless student from the Faculty of Law who spoke on behalf of the 30th of September Committee.

In the streets surrounding the university campus carloads of violent gang members boasted their fire power and openly exhibited their pistols and submachine guns so that their intimidatory message would reach the students meeting in the Martyrs' Gallery.

More than three hundred students from the various faculties were waiting to hear Fidel when somebody, as if transmitting a death message, shouted: "Anyone who talks of things he shouldn't, will be talking for the last time." It was evident that the threat was for the speaker.

Fidel got up from his chair and with a firm and measured step headed for the center of the spacious room. After asking for a one-minute silence in memory of the martyrs, his strong voice

9. Rafael Trejo (1910-30) and Antonio Guiteras Holmes (1906-35), revolutionary Cuban leaders who fought against the dictatorships. The former died from injuries received in an anti-Machado demonstration and the latter was assassinated by order of Fulgencio Batista. *Ed.*

could be heard condemning gangsterism and what it signified in terms of dishonoring the finest revolutionary tradition.

He proceeded to read out an official list with the names of all the gang members and FEU leaders who had been awarded juicy sinecures in various public administration ministries.

There, in that very assembly, were presidents of schools who enjoyed government perks through their connections with the gangs. The confrontation was tumultuous. But nobody or nothing could silence Fidel's energetic attack on gangsterism.

When the news of that young student's valiant words reached the gangsters circling the University, out of shame and frustration, they decided to take revenge; but Fidel's luck saved him from death.

It was perhaps the first time that Fidel found himself in the disadvantageous position of "one against the rest" in defense of truth and dignity.

The assault on the Moncada Garrison on July 26, 1953 initiated a historical process that culminated in a triumphant Revolution prepared to shake off the chains that held the island to the colossus of the North. And that is what happened.

Fidel Castro is the heir of the finest revolutionary tradition; for his universal—and concurrently totally Cuban—concepts he is a worthy inheritor of the forgers of Cuban independence and of those who over successive generations fought to make the island genuinely free, sovereign and independent.

Fidel fought and achieved in life what Varela,<sup>10</sup> Martí, Céspedes, Mella, Guiteras and Chibás dreamed of and died for. His mission has been fulfilled. Now it is for the new generations to maintain on high the sovereign banner of national independence.

## CATALYZING MOVEMENT

MICHAEL MANLEY, FORMER PRIME MINISTER  
OF JAMAICA

A catalysing movement has taken place in our hemisphere and there is a man who is like a solid rock. The movement is the Cuban Revolution and the man is Fidel Castro.

10. Félix Varela (1787-1853), 19th century priest and philosopher, who taught the Cubans independent thought. *Ed.*



## HERALD OF THE FUTURE

MIGUEL BARNET, CUBAN WRITER

I have had been granted the privilege of living in Fidel Castro's era. The fact that that man is Cuban and I have his friendship is an even greater privilege. Fidel is a veritable maestro of generations and a herald of the future. I believe in him because he is honourable, intelligent and patriotic, and because he has designed the nation dreamed of by our National Hero José Martí. The best of all this is that while being a legend he is also flesh and blood and his discourse has absolute relevance. Nobody on this

convulsed planet has risen up against injustice like him; nobody has done more for a people than him. I feel pride as a Latin American for having him here, alive, acting and unswayable. Fidel is a hope, an idea, a school.

## MY GOLDEN DREAM

NAOMI CAMPBELL, BRITISH MODEL

Fidel Castro is a very, very intelligent and interesting person. A man who constitutes a source of inspiration for everyone. My golden dream was to meet him and it came true. He is a distinctive being.

## AT OUR SIDE

NELSON MANDELA, POLITICIAN, FORMER  
PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA

Fidel Castro is one of my great friends. I am proud of being among those who support Cubans' right to elect their own destiny. The sanctions castigating the Cubans for having elected self-determination are in opposition to the world

order we wish to install. The Cubans facilitated us both resources and instruction on how to fight and to win. I am a loyal man and I will never forget that at our homeland's most somber moments in the fight against apartheid, Fidel Castro was at our side.



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## GREAT ANIMATOR

NELSON PEREIRA DOS SANTOS, BRAZILIAN  
FILMMAKER

Fidel Castro is the great animator of this new Latin American film movement that, to our joy, we see the new generations joining.

## TELLURIC DYNAMISM

NICOLÁS GUILLÉN, CUBAN NATIONAL POET

July 26 signals the start of the Revolution. When a handful of young people led by Fidel Castro set out to take the Moncada Garrison—one of the episodes of the greatest nobleness and heroic intrepidity in the history of Cuba—they were affirming their will to make a profound change in national life.

Martí infuses our Revolution with his spirit and clairvoyance; Fidel Castro will instantly communicate to it his personal telluric dynamism, elevating it to the level of our century, arming it with Marxism-Leninism, converting it into an invincible and youthful force. The

Revolution that was unleashed on July 26 is now an unyielding fact.

## IT WILL CONTINUE TO SHINE OUT

NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV, POLITICIAN, FORMER  
GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY  
OF THE SOVIET UNION

In the period in which Fidel Castro led his revolution into victory and entered Havana with his troops, we had no idea of the political orientation that his regime might follow.

We knew that there was some communists in the movement headed by Castro, but the Cuban Communist Party had no contact with him. When Castro's men took Havana we had to rely exclusively on press and radio reports from Cuba itself and other countries, to know what was happening. Overall, the situation was not at all clear. We had never heard of the person who Fidel appointed as president. Moreover, Cuba had not recognized our government, so for a long time we had no relations with the new regime.



In relation to Castro's personal value, his position on declaring the socialist nature of the Revolution was a valiant and admirable decision.

Today Cuba exists as an independent socialist country, right in the bared teeth of voracious U.S. imperialism. It is to be hoped that the example of Cuba, with Fidel in the lead, will continue shining like a light.

## GREAT CONFIDENCE

NORMAN GRIMARD, POLITICIAN, CANADIAN  
SENATOR

Fidel Castro has great confidence in the future of Cuba in spite of the economic penury it is experiencing and is not concealing the truth concerning the inconveniences of current life on the island, while being confident that the programs and reforms being applied will contribute to taking it forward.

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## FASCINATING CHARACTER

OLIVER STONE, U.S. FILM DIRECTOR

Fidel Castro is the most fascinating character that I have ever met.

## A GREAT FRIEND

OMAR TORRIJOS HERRERA, GENERAL AND  
POLITICIAN, FORMER HEAD OF STATE  
OF PANAMA

U.S. citizens should be convinced that the Cubans are a people that will never let themselves be trampled on.

I am aware that there is a treaty because there is a Cuban Revolution. Cuba has had to pay a high social price for all of Latin America.

If we can sit down today and discuss face to face with the U.S. Government, we owe that in part to the existence of the Cuban Revolution. After the triumph in Cuba, all the peoples of this hemisphere are a little more free.

Many people in Latin America perceived the presence of Cubans in Africa sympathetically.



To that point, we were always used to it being others who came here. Now it is Latin America that has gone to the aid of Africa.

Fidel is a great friend. He has conducted himself very well with me. He is a man of firm principles.

They used to say that Fidel and myself were a pair of loonies; now they respect the two loonies more than ever.

Fidel and I maintain excellent relations. We have our differences, but always within a great respect and affection. We are in close communication. He has always given me wise advice.

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## IT WILL END VICTORIOUS

OSCAR NIEMEYER, BRAZILIAN ARCHITECT

I have admired the Cuban Revolution since Fidel Castro was fighting in the Sierra Maestra. Cuba, a country where there are no illiterates, where everyone is equal and which is resisting the odious siege imposed by the United States, is an example for Latin America. The worst moment for the Cuban people has already passed. Cuba will know how to maintain its course.

I have designed an obelisk project in protest at the economic blockade imposed by the United States to be located in Cuba. The maquette projects a 15-meter monument in which something resembling a flag with one star emerges like the birth of dawn from half-broken fetters. This is a tribute to my Cuban friends.

I have a great admiration for Fidel. I am in solidarity with him in this struggle that he knew how to begin and that surely will end victoriously.

In the afternoons I receive friends to converse and sometimes we talk of philosophy. But when they refer to Plato, I am thinking of Fidel Castro.

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## COMPLETE FIGURE

OSWALDO GUAYASAMÍN, ECUADORIAN PAINTER,  
SCULPTOR AND MURALIST

Fidel Castro is the greatest man that I have known in my life. I have known many people, great musicians, great literary figures, great politicians... Never has anyone given me the impression of an integral being, a complete figure, in all his/her aspects, in each one of his/her phrases, like Fidel.

The people are at Fidel's side in a total way, the Cuban people say they hope Fidel will be eternal. Generalized thinking in Latin America is that Cuba is the realization of all the nations who aspire to be; it is our hope.

## INTELLIGENCE

OTELO SARAIVA DE CARVALHO, GENERAL, ONE  
OF THE MAIN PROTAGONISTS OF THE  
25TH OF APRIL, 1974 MOVEMENT IN PORTUGAL

I have great interest in, and a great passion for everything that has happened in Cuba and

particularly to meet Fidel Castro, the revolutionary who has had the valor and intelligence to confront the powerful and defend the poor.

## FULL OF GOOD AND GLORY

PABLO ARMANDO FERNÁNDEZ, CUBAN POET

*For Fidel*

My determination needs your assistance.  
I do not believe myself capable of restoring  
to words their undamaged innocence  
that is essential to know;  
if I am to sing to the gift, limpid essence,  
which in you is knowing how  
to give life luster, art and science  
that multiplies being in all humans.  
I already know that you have restored to words  
the integrity that brings the confidence  
of knowing they are the custodian of what is  
certain.  
I have tried to sing to you and I persevere,  
hearing you forging and nourishing hope  
that singing to you, is to celebrate January.  
It is to celebrate your noble birth  
that multiplies the patriotic spirit in others.

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## WE WOULD BE ERASED

PABLO NERUDA, CHILEAN POET,  
NOBEL LITERATURE PRIZE LAUREATE

The Republic of Cuba has been restored and the duty of all the peoples of the Americas is to defend it.

The language of Cuba is that of the truth, it is the language of Martí, of O'Higgins, of Bolívar. Cuba represents the thinking of Sarmiento. At this time Cuba is the hope of an entire century of false independence and we hope that it will win and implant its own justice.

Whoever is not with Cuba, with its revolution, with Fidel Castro, is on the other side, the side of ignominy and betrayal. If the Cuban Revolution is extinguished we will be erased from the chalk board of the world.

## WITH HOW MUCH HEROISM

PAULO EVARISTO ARNS, BRAZILIAN CARDINAL

We all know with how much heroism and sacrifice the people of that country have been able to resist external aggression and the immense

challenge of eradicating acute poverty, illiteracy and chronic social problems. At this point in time Cuba and Fidel Castro can feel proud of being an example of social justice in our continent, so impoverished by external debt.

### HIS SINCERITY

PERCIVAL J. PATTERSON, POLITICIAN, PRIME  
MINISTER OF JAMAICA

Not even Fidel's detractors cannot fault his sincerity, his intellectual wisdom, his capacity as a speaker and his personal charisma. We are his brothers in the struggle against injustice, racism and imperialism.

### INDELIBLE MEMORIES

PHAN VAN DONG, FORMER PRIME MINISTER  
OF VIET NAM

Fidel's visit to Viet Nam in September 1973 took place at a historical moment of great importance for us. It constituted the most beautiful expression of the broad movement of soli-



darity and support for our country that developed in Cuba under Fidel's famous proposal that for Viet Nam, Cuba is even prepared to give its own blood.

Cuba was the first country in the world to recognize the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Viet Nam and to establish a diplomatic mission in the liberated zone. It was equally the first government to send an official delegation to the liberated zone of South Viet Nam.

I have a heart. With it I live. And perennially within it is the image of joy that the Cuban leader brought me when he visited me in my home. Fidel left me indelible memories.

## MORE NOTABLE

PHILIP BRENNER, PROFESSOR AT THE AMERICAN  
UNIVERSITY

Cuba's success in education and health is all the more notable as it has come about during forty years of U.S. hostility and after the collapse of its trade agreements with the disappearance of the Soviet Union.

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## GREAT CONFIDENCE

PIERRE SALINGER, U.S. WRITER,  
JOURNALIST, PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESMAN DURING  
THE J. F. KENNEDY GOVERNMENT

When I was in the White House I had the impression of a Castro standing before 400 or 500 thousand people pronouncing harangues, speeches, etc. Now, seeing him at close quarters, talking with him, I have been able to appreciate that he is a man with great confidence in himself, calm, with an exceptional sense of humor and extremely intelligent.

## UNIQUE EXAMPLE

PIETRO NENNI, FORMER GENERAL SECRETARY  
OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF ITALY

We all have our eyes fixed on Cuba as the example given by you is unique. To date, no little country has had the valor to confront a large one as the Cubans have done. For that reason the Cuban Revolution has great world backing that is consolidating with every day that passes.

Fidel Castro enjoys the admiration and the affection of all the peoples.

## HE MERITS ALL HOMAGE

PINO RAUTI, ITALIAN POLITICIAN

Fidel Castro is an immense figure, a giant of history who guards all his charm intact. He continues to be an important reference point for many. One should reflect on his great figure and from the human point of view he merits all homage.

## A FIGURE OF THIS CENTURY

POMPEYO MÁRQUEZ, FORMER GENERAL  
SECRETARY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY  
OF VENEZUELA

To refer to Fidel Castro obliges one to leave aside formality, ready-made phrases and the various qualifications with which he is labelled.

I define Fidel Castro as a figure of this century who, literally speaking, has distinguished himself from the decade of the 60s to date.

Fidel has been and is a creator, an innovator, a politician of great sagacity and intuition who knows how to evade the traps frequently set for him from January 1959 to today.

Evaluating his permanence in power throughout this period, one should highlight his firmness accompanied by a great flexibility. These qualities have opened the gates of a large part of the world, in practice defeating the blockade that the United States is pledged to maintain.

Fidel's gamut of international relations is extensive. Partisans of the blockade are lessening and every day new horizons are opening up to socialist Cuba. Like Pope John Paul II we say: "Let the world open up to Cuba and Cuba to the world." This is the perspective that should be raised before this heroic little country which so much links us to Caribbeans, to Latin Americans.

## THEY NEVER GROW OLD

RAFAEL ALBERTI, SPANISH POET

Ideas like those defended by Fidel Castro never grow old. I continue to retain from the Cuban leader the image of a Homeric hero, as much

for the numerous combats with youthfulness as for his impressive character. Fidel is the hoped-for light of a future of more solidarity and justice.

## GREAT DESIRE

RAJIV GANDHI, FORMER PRIME MINISTER  
OF INDIA

Under the leadership of President Fidel Castro, the heroic people of Cuba defeated an unjust and exploitative regime and established a new state. Indira Gandhi had a great desire to visit Cuba and to greet Fidel in his country of origin. That did not happen. Indira has died, but we are continuing her inconclusive mission.

## ALTERNATIVE LAW

RAMIRO BARRENECHEA, BOLIVIAN LAWYER,  
PROFESSOR AND NATIONAL DEPUTY

Fidel Castro has revolutionized law by demonstrating in theory and in practice the existence of an alternative popular and liberating law in

the face of dogmatic regulations of oppression and injustice: a law that organizes popular participation in the exercise of power.

## FEET ON THE GROUND

RAMIRO CORREIA, COMMANDER, DOCTOR,  
FORMER MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL  
OF THE REVOLUTION OF PORTUGAL

Optimism is one thing but not having one's feet on the ground, and being aware that that is the only way of taking ahead the revolutionary process is another. I repeat, the Revolution has to be made with one's feet on the ground, as Fidel Castro has done in Cuba.

## HE HAS DEMONSTRATED

RAMSEY CLARK, FORMER U.S. ATTORNEY  
GENERAL

Fidel has demonstrated that it is possible for a country in the midst of a struggle without resources to educate, apportion housing, health,

work and all that humanity requires. And look at the rest of the world. We need that model.

## THE AUTHORITY

RAÚL CASTRO, GENERAL OF THE ARMY, MINISTER OF THE ARMED FORCES OF CUBA

Nobody in Cuba will ever have again the authority that Fidel has for being what he is, for



having made what he has made, a true and profound Revolution, with its virtues and defects.

## HE BROKE WITH ALL SCHEMA

RAÚL LORENZO, JOURNALIST AND POLITICIAN  
OF CUBAN ORIGIN RESIDENT IN VENEZUELA

The merit of Fidel Castro and everything that configures his strategy, is precisely that he is triumphing when nobody in Cuba thought he could triumph.

The people, guided by traditional parameters, not only of this country but of what we could call a whole continent, never imagined—and I think it would have been very difficult to do so—that a small and virtually scattered guerrilla movement could grow to defeat a strongly armed force of elite troops with all means at their disposal. That possibility did not fit within logic.

Fidel developed an entire military strategy but with a highly accentuated political aspect from the Sierra.

The Sierra was not only a trench but a tribunal. From there national life was focused and a moral adhesion was created in the environ-



ment of the Sierra Maestra, which even reached the army and contributed to its demoralization. This is another of the many *sui generis* aspects of the Cuban process.

Fidel broke with all schema and all parameters. More than breaking, he shattered into fragments concepts held by many as inviolable.

A guerrilla movement could not win against an army. That idea not only dominated in Cuba, but in the world. Without the army or with the army, but never against the army. That was a generalized belief.

A strong attempt at nationalist reforms not as yet a socialist revolution—note—a medium-strong nationalist movement could not maintain itself in power facing the United States. Obviously, a socialist revolution far less.

Those ideas were dominant. Nobody questioned them. They were like familiar faces and above all, respected, even venerated.

The only person to see behind those mummified faces that had existed for a long long time was Fidel, and Fidel had the mummies jumping into the air. The blooming must have been gigantic in order for the dust to reach our days.

The figure of Fidel as a revolutionary claiming the right of Cuban nationality in the face

of the United States represents something new in the life of our countries and has much sympathy in the Third World nations.

This favorable echo of admiration has its maximum point in the Latin American countries. That has been clearly evident in Fidel's visits to Ecuador, Mexico and particularly, Venezuela, where the campaign against Cuba was very fierce.

Fidel arrived and as soon as he touched ground, nobody remembered all the barbarities that had been said for days to create an adverse public opinion of the visit.

Fidel's talent lies in having made the historical interpretation when the rest didn't see it; he saw that the things that he did could be done. His genius is located in his knowing how to interpret the historical picture.

All right, geniuses are those people who interpret their historical moment and unfold within that context, within that picture, developing the ideas that they consider to be correct and which are the ones for which the nation or the people, in that instant, must fight.

In exile some people who are inveterate anti-Castroites and who carry their hatred to the point of irrationality, have wanted to deny Fidel's

talent to me. They have said: "Castro is not as intelligent as he is painted. He's just been lucky." I have refuted that: No, no, Castro is a genius. He has great talent because if you say that the circumstances have been favorable, his intelligence has precisely consisted in interpreting those circumstances and not only interpreting them, but also managing them. And for that, indisputably, great talent is required.

One can reach power for various reasons, a stroke of luck, for example. But maintaining that for thirty years is due to talent, convictions, for having known how to interpret the historical process.

Fidel brings together the ideological inheritance of the Veterans and Patriots Movement, the Minorista Group,<sup>11</sup> Guiteras and above all, the fathers of the homeland headed by José Martí.

From the very beginnings of the Republic the figure of Martí has been alive, present. Looking at everything that had happened would always evoke the exclamation: "If Martí were

11. The Minorista Group was created in 1923 by left-wing intellectual youth, and its members pronounced themselves against false values and in favour of a radical and complete formal and ideological renovation in literature and the arts. They were also concerned at the political state of affairs in Cuba and worldwide. *Ed.*

alive!” because the people believed very strongly that if Martí had not fallen in Dos Ríos, Cuba’s destiny would have been different.

The people longed for change. That was something on their minds. A change in the management of public administration for which Eddy Chibás fought, in the civic context and what the communist party had battled for in the social context.

We cannot forget that Cuba functioned as both a political and economic satellite of the United States.

When Fidel arrived, he brought together all these ideas and converted them into reality. He is a historical figure, a paladin. He represents the vindication of the national spirit and the need for reform in all orders of Cuban life.

He is the symbol of what can become of a Spartan idea in a Spartan man, because it is difficult to conceive of greater contretemps than those the Cuban process had to confront in the development of a liberation process.

There is a fact that exemplifies this criterion like no other. After the *Granma* landing, Fidel found himself alone with two other combatants, walking all over those inhospitable places, totally exhausted, without knowing anything

about the rest of the expeditionaries, and even in the midst of those incredible circumstances, enough to have made anyone desist, he maintained on high the decision to make the Revolution.

And nothing portrays him better than that exclamation of his: "Now we'll definitely win the war!" when he managed to reunite the scant figure of twelve men. That is Fidel.

Fidel demonstrated that a guerrilla movement could defeat an army, that a Revolution could survive even against the will of the United States. But he even contributed something more.

Fidel and his Revolution demonstrated that this was only possible if there was no vacillation on the way, if principles were never betrayed, if there was not a disposition at all times to go to the final consequences if necessary. And this is very important, very important.

## HIS APPRECIATION

RAÚL ROA GARCÍA, CUBAN INTELLECTUAL  
AND POLITICIAN

Life reserved for me revolutionary honors that I never dreamt of even when I hung the star of

an electric light bulb in my cell at the Model Prison:<sup>12</sup> having merited the confidence of our *Comandante en Jefe* to undertake the post of Minister of Foreign Relations, to be a contemporary of Fidel, and to have merited his esteem crowned my revolutionary joy. What could be greater than that?

Fidel hears the grass grow and sees what is going on around the corner.

## THE TRUTH

RENÉ CABEL, SINGER OF CUBAN ORIGIN  
RESIDENT IN COLOMBIA

I never imagined that Fidel Castro could be so much time in power. If he has achieved that it is because he has done very good things. Indisputably, the guy has demonstrated capacity, a tremendous talent. Moreover, he doesn't let

12. The construction of the National Male Penitentiary—Model Prison—was completed in 1931, during Gerardo Machado's government, as a replica of Joliet Prison in Illinois, United States. A very efficient place for the isolation of prisoners, it was not so effective in terms of their rehabilitation. Those who took part in the assault on the Moncada and Carlos Manuel de Céspedes Garrisons were imprisoned in this penitentiary, including Fidel Castro. Today it is a national monument. *Ed.*

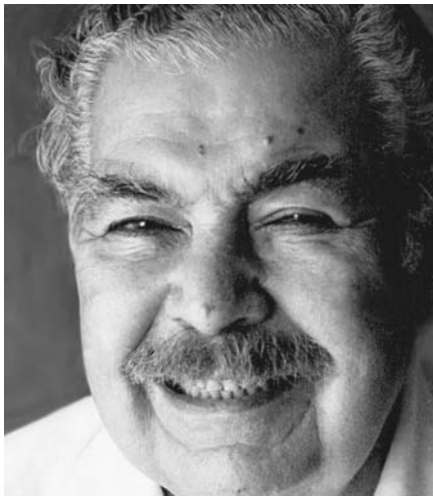
anyone impose anything, wherever and from whomever it comes.

He is already part of history. You'd have to be a sonofabitch to deny that. I am not a friend of his. Neither am I political, but I am not afraid to recognize the truth.

## THE VALID

RENÉ PORTOCARRERO, CUBAN VISUAL ARTIST

Now we are getting to the unknown roots of our sentiment, which is the motherland, which



is Cuba, which is the Revolution, which is Fidel. Which, at the end of the day, is the valid, the definitive.

## IT HAS SURPASSED

*ELITE MAGAZINE OF VENEZUELA*

The influence of Fidel Castro has amply surpassed the area of his little country. Numerous groups in Latin America and other parts of the world are proclaiming themselves his followers and raising a flag that is, above all, a revolutionary affirmation: Castroism.

## HE IS AN ICON

RICHARD COPLAND, PRESIDENT OF THE U.S.  
SOCIETY OF TRAVEL AGENTS

Fidel Castro is the most courteous and pleasant man that I have ever met. It was a night that we will all treasure for the rest of our lives. He is an icon.



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## AUTHORITY OF LEADERSHIP

RICHARD NIXON, POLITICIAN, FORMER  
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

We should be certain of one fact: Fidel Castro possesses those indefinable qualities that make him to be a leader of men. Independently of what we think of him, he will be a key factor in the development of Cuba. He has the authority of leadership.

## SERMON ON THE MOUNT

ROBERT F. WILLIAMS,  
U.S. AFRICAN-AMERICAN LEADER

I have seen, oh yes, the glorious face of Cuba. I have heard the voice of Cuba, equally impressive. It was the wise and firm voice of the great Fidel Castro. I consider it the greatest honor in my life to have heard the greatest humanitarian leader of the epoch pronounce a new Sermon on the Mount.

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## WE NEED IT

ROBERT MUGABE, PRESIDENT OF ZIMBABWE

Allow me to say to Fidel Castro: please continue this magnificent work. There are those who say that you are exporting the Revolution to other countries. If exporting the Revolution is educating these young people so that on returning to their own countries they will impart the values that they have known here, then I say: We need more, because we need them!

## IN THE FACE OF ALL THE PRESSURE

ROBERT REDFORD, U.S. ACTOR

I admire Fidel Castro. How could one not admire a man who has been capable of maintaining his country during so many years in the face of all the U.S. pressure?

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## HIS BEST TITLE

ROBERT SURO, U.S. JOURNALIST

Fidel has various titles. But it would seem that his authority is best derived from the name that the people give him: *Comandante*.

Everyone in Cuba calls him Fidel. It would seem that they have all seen him in person at some point. He governs like a kind of head of family.

His life is adorned with legendary details. Seeing him in person his voice is immediately impressive: gentle, high toned; his physical appearance does not seem to predict that voice, because Fidel is tall and muscular.

Castro has projected his personality on revolutionary Cuba in such a way that it affects every citizen.

Castro would not have been able to arouse such enthusiasm and loyalty among Cubans if, in addition to his personality, he hadn't offered them realizations, which he has fulfilled, and this never occurred before with any politician in Cuba.

## A RECOLLECTION

ROBERTO FERNÁNDEZ RETAMAR, CUBAN  
WRITER AND POET

I was in Matanzas when the events of August 5, 1994 occurred. That night I heard Fidel's speech on the radio. Back in Havana the following afternoon I discovered the details of the incident and saw the footage. A counterrevolutionary riot had been dissolved like salt in water and not only on account of the rapid response by active citizens but by that of Fidel himself. He had turned up in the area, walking unarmed through the streets, being acclaimed even by some of those who minutes before were shouting hostile slogans and brandishing sticks or stones. Naturally, many people were perplexed by that image of the maximum leader of a country descending from his vehicle and walking into the midst of a tumult which nobody knew the extent of. That brought to my mind a memory of many years back, the memory of the first time that I heard Fidel speak in public at the University of Havana.

It was at the end of the 40s in the last century, as one has to get used to saying. We uni-

versity students had occupied the precinct of our Alma Mater to protest an increase in the price of public transportation. We strolled about without much meaning, particularly in the then-called Cadenas Plaza, in front of which the wooden platform used for the University theater performances had not been dismantled. Suddenly Fidel Castro climbed onto the aforementioned stage and spoke to us, the students. Although he was an independent law student—so he didn't attend the regular courses—he frequently visited the University, where he was well known. For example, people knew of his interventions in certain events, like that of Cayo Confites in 1947, a frustrated attempt to invade the Dominican Republic and depose the Trujillo dictatorship, and the Bogotazo that shook Colombia after the assassination of Gaitán. Moreover, in Cuba Fidel used to participate in what the youth of Roa and Pablo de la Torriente<sup>13</sup> called “the university *tánganas*.”<sup>14</sup> So, he was

13. Raúl Roa García (1907-82), a Cuban revolutionary who worked for many years as Minister of Foreign Affairs; his attitude won him the epithet “Foreign Minister of Dignity,” and Pablo de la Torriente Brau (1901-36), a Cuban journalist who was born in Puerto Rico and died defending the Republic during the Spanish Civil War. *Ed.*

14. *Tángana* means quarrel, racket. *Ed.*

a restless and combative youth to whom one could apply José Martí's line of verse: "On behalf of whom will I spill my life?" I had seen him at other times, almost always surrounded by girls, but I had never talked to him or heard him speak in public. I would do so for the first time that day.

Admirer that I was and being from the Greek world—I studied Philosophy and Literature—seeing him standing aloft on the stage where classical works were performed, I was struck by something that I don't think I had noticed before: his profile, which recalled the one transmitted to us as certain characters in *The Iliad*: for example, those illustrating the corresponding Martí article in *The Golden Age*. But the brief and singular words he directed at us caught my attention far more. It seemed that some student leaders were in collusion with the government and were trying to stifle the university protest. Fidel defended it with passion and suddenly exclaimed that the sun was very strong—it was midday—, then he proposed we should continue exchanging ideas while marching in a show of disagreement on the Presidential Palace. He then got down from the stage and headed the impromptu demonstration.

When I commented to some people how Fidel's action of August 5, 1994 had reminded me of that long-ago anecdote that he had probably forgotten, they found my evocation far-fetched. Was this not the hero of Moncada, of the Sierra, of Girón [the Bay of Pigs], of hundreds of feats? For that reason and for much more, I felt so content listening to the speech that Fidel gave in the Aula Magna of the University of Havana the following year, on September 4, 1995, on the 50th anniversary of his matriculation in that institution. In his speech Fidel proclaimed: "It was a privilege to enter this University... because it was here that I learnt possibly the best things of my life, because it was here that I discovered the best ideas of our epoch and of our times, because it was here that I became a revolutionary, because it was here that I became a follower of Martí and because it was here that I became a socialist."

## THE GREATS

ROBERTO MATA ECHAURREN, CHILEAN PAINTER

Fidel is a hero at the altitude of the greats of the past and of our time.

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## A GREAT PEDAGOGUE

RODNEY ARISMENDI, POLITICIAN, FORMER  
GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY  
OF URUGUAY

When Fidel triumphed on January 1, 1959 I had informative knowledge of him. I knew of his revolutionary feats and his dedication and heroism as a student fighter, and of his cooperation with other peoples, such as the attempted expedition to the Dominican Republic.

I followed his trajectory closely after the assault on the Moncada Garrison. In 1957, when I was in the Soviet Union, I was invited to give a lecture to more than 800 Moscow propagandists. Those attending, people of different ages, included former war combatants, many of whom had been decorated. They had great political and military interest in the beginning of the guerrilla movement in Latin America, of the presence of the revolutionaries in the Sierra Maestra. They asked me numerous questions, among them how Fidel could be defined socially and politically.

I replied, first, that one did not have to evaluate in a schematic way what that movement



could signify or what Fidel could signify. That it wasn't easy to pigeonhole him and state: he is a leader of the petit bourgeoisie, a revolutionary intellectual. Because in certain layers of the Latin American revolutionary movement, amidst the student and intellectual sectors, the anti-imperialist revolutionary struggle is sometimes sustained by many people; that I could not describe him in any other way than as a revolutionary student.

I was telling them that I was placing enormous hope in the radical nature of the Revolution as I knew Fidel's personal antecedents. At that time the essential part of *History Will Absolve Me* was circulating in the Americas as a great document, because in its definitive form it didn't have the merited diffusion. What was proposed in it was a new phenomenon in Latin America. Because it pointed to a likewise new era of the anti-imperialist struggle on the continent, of the struggle against dictatorships, against tyrannies imposed by the United States in the cold war period.

The very content, the profundity of the document, what I thought then was not only confirmed by but amplified by the Cuban Revolution. I continue to believe that *History Will Absolve Me*

is one of the great revolutionary political documents, with a large indication of political maturity. If the document is evaluated in itself, it is not a socialist document; it is a revolutionary, advanced anti-imperialist democratic document. That is one of its merits, it is a document to unite the majority of the Cuban people through a program rather than entrust to it socialist goals in advance.

It has merit for the maturity of its objectives, the programmatic proposals, its analysis of the reality of Cuba, subjected to exploitation, plundered by imperialism and moreover, with a profound knowledge of that life. Apart from that it is a very beautiful literary work, in its drafting, dominion of good Spanish and its high inspirational tone.

From its first day I had celebrated the triumph of the Cuban Revolution as something new. In an article I wrote for the *Internacional* magazine in 1959, I noted the qualitative change the Cuban Revolution signified for the revolutionary process on the continent.

The year 1959 brought two great events: the ascent of the USSR with the launch of the first sputnik and the triumph of the Cuban Revolution.

My first personal encounter with Fidel took place in the home of Celia (Sánchez) in a meeting with a group of Latin American communists who were highly impressed with the double fact of Fidel's youth and intellectual vigor, as well as the audacity of his theoretical thinking, the freshness of his expression and his simplicity.

One fact impressed me: on expressing a judgment on Latin America, something of not much importance, I gave him an informational precision. And in the course of the meeting he began to speak directly to me on many occasions.

Sometimes, talking abroad with people who had contradictions with Fidel, I always rejected the image of him being the only person to talk. Fidel can converse on many issues; he is a permanent student, he vividly picks up on realities, he is an attentive participant in dialogue. That impression was deeply engraved on my mind from the first moment.

I also attended the first mass meetings. With hundreds of thousands of people entering into the way of the Revolution, Fidel appeared like a kind of great revolutionary pedagogue, systematically educating the people, the working class.

Sometimes, people with other customs—for example the Europeans give much importance to the written speech—were taken aback by Fidel's free oratory, at the same time so rich. He was always characterized by introducing loads of fundamental theoretical-political ideas in his addresses. Every public act is transformed into a people's school, into a revolutionary school.

## YOU CAN CONVERSE WITH HIM

ROGER ETCHEGARAY, FRENCH CARDINAL,  
FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE VATICAN PAPAL  
JUSTICE AND PEACE COUNCIL

I have visited Cuba on various occasions. The first time was Christmas of 1988 and I had the joy of knowing the Island from west to east. From my first contacts with the Cuban people I felt like a native. Everything to do with their daily lives, their joys, sufferings and aspirations impassions me... even from Rome!

I have met with President Fidel Castro on various occasions. We have discussed many subjects. He is a man with whom you can converse

and argue. I conserve a wonderful memory of my interviews with President Castro.

## GREAT VISION OF THE WORLD

ROGER IRESON, GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE  
U.S. UNITED METHODIST CHURCH HIGHER  
EDUCATION AND MINISTRIES BOARD

Fidel Castro is a leader of world dimensions, impassioned, with a great vision of the world and a commitment to the battle for equality and hope for a better future.

## MAESTRO OF SEDUCTION

ROMÁN OROZCO, SPANISH JOURNALIST

I observe the man who at that time, in April 1989, was sixty-three years old. Wearing his traditional olive-green work fatigues. That man who mixes dramatics with humor. Who can talk of death along with the sweet potato harvest so important for the survival of the island, besieged and blockaded like Numantia, by an empire that humanity could never have dreamed of.

When he talks, Fidel indicates with his finger. He points it at your heart. He doesn't take his eyes off you. Although he might twist from side to side, he always conserves something, even if it is a regard out of the corner of his eye at the interlocutor. He studies him or her, observes the reactions. He asks questions in order to disconcert. He envelopes his audience in his fluent and lengthy language. He is a total maestro of seduction and his bitterest enemies acknowledge that virtue in Fidel Castro.

## MY ADMIRATION WAS BORN THERE

RÓMULO ESCOBAR BETANCOURT, PANAMANIAN  
POLITICIAN

Omar Torrijos was sympathetic to the Cuban Revolution even before he met Fidel. In his public trajectory he perceived him as a man dedicated to revolutionary violence. That was his original concept of Fidel.

When the Cuban authorities detained the *Layla* and *Johnny Express* vessels, Torrijos felt very concerned and trapped in two situations:

protesting at the attack on vessels flying the Panamanian colors although there were no Panamanians on board and, on the other hand, the concern that confronting Cuba over that incident could mean placing himself in a position against the Revolution. He did not want that.

I recall that he was very attentive to any statement that Fidel might make in relation to these incidents. The night we heard that Fidel was going to speak the two of us were alone in Farallón and listened to his speech on short-wave radio.

Fidel affirmed that he was prepared to give the Panamanian government an explanation of these events, but never that of the United States. I will never forget that he jumped up and told me: “this is the moment to send a delegation to Cuba.”

I was at the head of the group. I talked with Fidel. He explained everything to me. He told me that he didn't know Omar, but had seen him in films and had the impression that he was a man who profoundly believed in what he was doing and who was ready to die in the struggle for his country's liberation.

Fidel asked me to tell him that he was risking being left in a blind alley and that the gringos

were going to massacre the Panamanian people as they were doing with Viet Nam.

And that as a leader, he had a responsibility: to operate so as to avoid violence if he could find a way to do so.

When I transmitted the message Torrijos was upset. He commented to me: "That was what he said to you." He made me repeat it. He told me: "I was convinced that that man was going to send me a submachine gun." I replied that I was also surprised that he had given me that message, given that I didn't know him either.

He was surprised that Fidel hadn't sent him a violent message but one of concern. That message had a great influence on Omar. At that moment it was really important. That was where the estimation, admiration and great affection that Torrijos held for Fidel was born. My admiration of Fidel was likewise born there.

## A JULES VERNE

ROSEMBERG PABÓN PABÓN,  
COLOMBIAN POLITICIAN

The Cubans have the good fortune to have a leader like Fidel, who is one of the clearest



men of this century. Keeping things in proportion, he is also a Jules Verne who advanced his history and his homeland some 150 years. The Cubans must feel great pride in having a man, a universal leader of the status of Fidel Castro.

## AUTHENTICALLY NATIONAL

SALVADOR ALLENDE, POLITICIAN, FORMER  
PRESIDENT OF CHILE

The Cuban Revolution, while remaining authentically national, belongs to the Latin American peoples in terms of its anti-imperialist and anti-feudal projection.

The presence of campesinos with their long-held desire for land and their faith in Cuba's destiny that they will contribute to creating is a living symbol of the Agrarian Reform. Seeds sown in Cuban agriculture that will germinate in lands all over America.

Today I will bear witness to a government and people united in the task of promoting economic development independent of foreign tutelage and of guaranteeing its full democracy.



## A HERO OF OUR TIMES

SAMORA MACHEL, FORMER PRESIDENT OF  
MOZAMBIQUE

Fidel is an indisputable leader of the Cuban people, but moreover, he is a hero of our times.

## GENUINELY CUBAN

SANTIAGO CARRILLO, FORMER GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF SPAIN

The first time I talked with Fidel was when I visited Cuba in 1960. The son of Galician émigrés, he placed much emphasis on the Cuban Revolution being a “Spanish revolution.” What he intended by that was to differentiate it from other revolutions in this century; to indicate that it was something different and it was not necessary to look for hands alien to Cuba; international conspiracies, alien maneuvers; that what was occurring was something authentically and exclusively Cuban.

At the time he was talking with me and Juan Rejano, Fidel was preparing in a very singular way a speech that he was going to make at the United Nations. It was not about taking notes; he doubtless had a privileged memory and during the course of the evening he got up several times and repeated to us what he was thinking of saying: entire paragraphs, improvised during the conversation, including one in which he thought to condemn the Franco regime and declare Cuban solidarity with the Spanish people.

Of course, the Revolution is genuinely Cuban: a marvellous improvisation in which recipes were not repeated and in which creativity and ingenuity frequently bonded; hence “what set it on its way.”

I was captivated by that atmosphere. I was aware of the great sincerity and honorableness of Fidel, a veritable giant, a force of nature, a man who vouched for his words with his own life.

## THE MIRACLE OF LIVING

SARA GONZÁLEZ, CUBAN SINGER-SONGWRITER

For those of us who build castles from art, the joyful presence of Fidel renews our life; his tenderness moves one to feel the fresh grasse, the delicate liana, water in the bromeliad. His gentlemanliness once again provokes candor, blushes and gratification. With his energy he has also taught us how to make the miracle of living with the essential, what is really necessary; that love remains and that what increases are our transcendental values, the patriotic road of the thousand leagues, with liberty, adventure

and its victory, conflict and its solution, fulfilling the utopia.

He gives us the courage and exigency for the capacity to resist, he is a cry of hope in this world of individualism and every moment at his side or facing his discourse is one of learning, love and dignity.

## A BETTER WORLD

SAUL LANDAU, U.S. INTELLECTUAL

As a group of U.S. citizens we organized ourselves to also demonstrate our support for Cuba's independence and human equality. Other students and writers, white and black, joined us. Fidel looked at us. He was surprised. One could read in his face that he didn't understand very well what was happening. Then he listened to what we were saying—we were talking in English—and he understood. His smile indicated his pleasure. Then he greeted us. But it was us who appreciated the humanism and spirit of sacrifice of the Cuban people in trying to construct a better world.

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## THE LIGHT IN LATIN AMERICA

SEKOU TOURE, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF GUINEA

Only the Revolution can last in time and space. But it is not its duration that gives it strength: it is a great will to transform, guided by an awareness essentially of progress for everyone. This is what makes the Cuban Revolution an example in the world.

It is comrade Fidel Castro himself who gives the best example of dedication. With a leader like him there is no room for bureaucracy. Nobody can prosper at the cost of the Revolution when the leader rejects all honors except the honor of serving his people. We have been able to confirm that.

We have weighed up his value, his degree of commitment to his people and his constant disposition to assume the function of a revolutionary leader. He is an example to us. Cuba is the light in Latin America.

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## A FIGHT FOR LIFE

SERGIO RAMÍREZ, NICARAGUAN WRITER  
AND POLITICIAN

The Cuban Adjustment Act is designed to foment illegal emigration through the contraband of persons. It represents a monstrous falsification of the truth and a cynical slander campaign against Cuba, while the United States maintains a gangsterish attitude to the migratory agreements it has contracted by criminally inciting Cubans to crossings in which they risk their lives, in order to gain "victims" to utilize in its political arsenal against the Cuban Revolution.

The United States has applied the policy of the stick and the carrot in order to impose its criteria, will and interests at world level. On the one hand it gives out crumbs, but if there is a rebellion, it immediately has recourse to the "diplomacy" of arms to return the "wayward sheep" to the fold of subordination. Such a policy has not produced the desired results in relation to Cuba. The Island of Martí, of Fidel, is an exception.

The Cuban people, with Fidel in the front line, will continue fighting until making it a reality,

with the same energy and tenacity employed to save little Elián. Their battle is to save the homeland. It is a fight for life.

## SENSE OF HUMOR

STAN DROMISKY, CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARIAN

Fidel Castro is confronting the island's current reality with great pragmatism, and moreover, he possesses a great sense of humor.

## HE HAS PROPELLED IT

SYDNEY POLLACK, U.S. FILMMAKER

Fidel Castro is already not a real figure but larger than life itself. He is an extremely intelligent world leader. He has great historical value given that he has survived nine U.S. presidents and because he has come into contact with history in a way that nobody else still living has. He has made it, he has seen it and he has moved it. He has been part of it, he has propelled it.



## AMAZING RISKS

TAD SZULC, U.S. JOURNALIST

Castro's personal role in initiating and leading the Revolution is impressive.

Fidel's luck is a reiterated theme in his existence. No other modern revolutionary leader or head of state has run so many personal amazing risks or participated so directly in the rigors of conspiracy, rebellion and open warfare.

No political leader in full possession of his mental faculties would have navigated from Mexico to Cuba in the manner in which Castro and his followers did; his cabin cruiser, carrying eighty-two men, had been built for no more than a dozen and was not suitable for transporting a military arsenal.

The landing of the expeditionaries on the Oriente coast, the two kilometres of tangled swamps and mangroves that they had to cross before reaching the beach itself, the battlefield of Alegría de Pío and the high and torturous tracks of the Sierra Maestra, provided the most hair-raising experiences that any military leader could confront. Castro so much wished to win his incredible guerrilla war that he accepted it

all without distress, creating an army while continuing to fight.

No political leader without an authentic military experience could have withstood two years, often without food, arms and munitions, in the heart of the Sierra Maestra, constantly on the march with his growing group of guerrillas up and down tracks full of mud and peppered with large rocks, crossing one forest after another. And, nevertheless, six weeks after the disaster at Alegría de Pío, Castro had the audacity to attack a detachment of Batista's army. That was the first victory.

## GENUINE AND IMPASSIONED HUMANISM

THABO MBKEI, PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA

The visit we recently made to Cuba recalled for us all of the greatness of the hearts of the Cuban people and of Fidel Castro and how much we have benefited from this fact. We were able to confirm the Cubans' constant commitment to help us in line with their possibilities to confront our challenges as a democratic country in growth.

When the memory was beginning to fade, our stay in Cuba could not fail to remind us all of the important contribution this country made to the struggle for freedom and peace in our region of Southern Africa.

While we were talking with comrade Fidel, we recalled the period that concluded in our region something more than ten years ago and that was witness to the enormous and concerted effort of the South Africa of apartheid to impose its designs on the region and in that way extend its crime.

Cuba's contribution to the defeat of the campaign of aggression and destabilization against an independent Africa was, naturally, particularly manifested by its decisive participation in the military struggle to defeat the apartheid forces that invaded Angola shortly after that country obtained its independence from Portugal.

The Cubans are genuinely committed to the African people's cause, they feel a great friendship for our people and are prepared to make sacrifices for us. For that reason we understood very well what they wanted to say when they affirmed that it was precisely their commitment to internationalism and solidarity that made it possible for them to be prepared to die if necessary in order that we should be free.

It is precisely on account of that strong and prevailing spirit that Cuba possesses that we currently have 463 Cuban doctors working in our public hospitals, especially in the rural areas. Forty-six of those doctors also lecture and as such are helping us both in our schools of medicine and our teaching hospitals.

In order to increase our own capacity in this sphere, Cuba has granted scholarships to 185 young South Africans who are currently studying on the island to become doctors.

Due to its commitment in helping us to radically improve the health of our people, Cuba has proposed renouncing patents on its medical products, as well as cooperating with us in their production, in a way that we can supply the poor of our country with reasonably priced medicines.

In addition to that, Cuba has agreed to work with us in the important scientific sphere of biotechnology so as to increase our research capacity in this field.

The facts demonstrate that when the Cuban people helped to defeat the monster of apartheid, it did so because we are friends at all times and not just when things are going well.

The Cuban people feel motivated by a genuine, sincere and impassioned humanism. They are proud of the rich and long history of struggle for their own freedom and social progress.

They do not hesitate to share what they have with those who need it. They wish to be part of a world of freedom, peace, prosperity and friendship among the peoples, and are determined to make their contribution to attain those objectives.

We shall never forget the notable contribution that this little country and especially Fidel has made to our own freedom without asking for anything in return.

## MOMENTS NEVER TO BE FORGOTTEN

TIMUR GAIDAR, JOURNALIST, *PRAVDA*  
NEWSPAPER CORRESPONDENT IN CUBA

I have lived moments of profound emotion in Cuba: the Bay of Pigs landing and the Missile Crisis. In both I witnessed at close hands Fidel's exceptional capacity as a leader. They are moments never to be forgotten.

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## AN ANTHOLOGICAL POEM

TOMÁS BORGE, NICARAGUAN WRITER AND  
POLITICIAN

In my conversations with Fidel Castro I have been especially impressed by the persuasive dissertation—an anthological poem—on Cuba's respect for human rights, and this man's reflections on human beings, humane qualities and their protagonism in history.

## INSPIRING EXAMPLE

VASCO GONÇALVES, PORTUGUESE POLITICIAN

What most attracts me about Cuba is how it is showing the world that it is possible to resist imperialism, U.S. empire. But this resistance is not a historical chance, it is the fruit of more than forty years of heroic struggle: from the early stages of the revolutionary struggle, the assault on the Moncada Garrison, a policy of national independence, the coherent realization of patriotic and liberating objectives, of popular participation in the construction of a society of social justice, freedom and socialism.

That is fruit of conscience raising, of political and social education, of the culture and cohesion of a people, of valor, of the exemplary tenacity and coherence of its leaders, of the mutual confidence between governors and the governed, of the ethics of the Revolution itself since its initial days.

The principal and acknowledged architect of this battle is Fidel Castro Ruz. The execution of his life and work is an inspiring example for his comrades, for the Cuban people and for men and women throughout the world whose ideal is human liberation in the widest sense of the word.

Fidel has a rare intelligence, a comprehension and consistent conduct in the most difficult and complex military, economic, political, social, cultural, religious and diplomatic situations. He is a maestro of military arts, of tactics and strategy, the firmest and most untiring combatant for the political, social, cultural and ethical instruction and training of his people.

Guided by a profound humanism, his actions are inspired by the greatest respect and responsibility for comrades that have died for the homeland, for the Revolution, for Socialism, and who are always present in his spirit and in his speeches.

Fidel Castro is the principal inspirer of the veritably epic struggle that a little country with limited resources is waging for national independence, for the Revolution and for Socialism.

## SYMBOL OF SOLIDARITY

VO NGUYEN GIAP, VIETNAMESE GENERAL  
(RETIRED)

Comrade Fidel Castro is an excellent revolutionary leader who, together with his combatants, attained the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, converting the liberated island into the principal revolutionary lighthouse of Latin America.

Under the direction of Fidel—first secretary of the Communist Party and president of the Council of State—Cuba has overcome all the difficulties; all the interventionist maneuvers; it has maintained and developed revolutionary achievements to date.

Fidel Castro and the revolutionary comrades are an example of indomitable heroism. He is a symbol of the immense strength of his people who are nurtured on the ideal of independence, freedom and Socialism.



For many years as president of the Non-Aligned Movement Fidel contributed to the struggle for peace, national independence, democracy and social development in the Third World and Latin American nations.

For Viet Nam Fidel Castro represents a symbol of solidarity and profound unity between the Vietnamese and Cuban peoples. Fidel pronounced these unforgettable words: "For Viet Nam Cuba is prepared to even give its own blood."

I wish Fidel Castro much health. With the Communist Party he is leading the Cuban Revolution to great achievements and important contributions aimed at the world advancing along the road of respect for and right to life, for the right to happiness of every person on the planet.

## THE MAN OF THE CENTURY

VOLODIA TEITELBOIM, CHILEAN INTELLECTUAL  
AND POLITICIAN

For me Fidel Castro is the man of the century, not only at continental level but at world level. Through the vicissitudes of life, including exile, I have known many political leaders and

many heads of state. I never saw a man who was greater or more profound, more intelligent, more principled. Everywhere I go I say that if the United States had a president that was 10% of Fidel, it would be a great democratic country.

## AUTHENTIC LEADER

WALDO FRANK, U.S. WRITER

There is a very strong link between Fidel Castro and the people, which is even maintained when he is speaking on television or at a popular rally. This is the kind of link that makes heroes, persons who totally interpret their people. The relationship between Castro and his people is very humane. He is an authentic leader and people have learned to love him.

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## SO PURE

WALTER H. BERUKOFF, CANADIAN  
BUSINESSMAN

Fidel Castro is one of the most important persons in history; he has led a country that was a besieged colony since the 16th century and has remained in government for more than forty years with the support of his people, whom he has given education and medical care probably better than that of 85%-90% in the world.

His history is distinct from that of many world leaders, and I even doubt that there is another world leader whose objectives and history have been so pure.

## HIS FIGURE

WIFREDO LAM, CUBAN VISUAL ARTIST RESIDENT  
IN EUROPE SINCE 1938

The existence of universal man can be made concrete in Cuba, with its native Indians, Africans, Asians and Europeans. It is the synthesis of humanity. We opened the way to attaining a universal comprehension. Being such a small

country, Cuba has triumphed. Seeing what is being done there restores our confidence in human beings. One can not speak coldly of a character and attitude like that of Fidel, and one cannot talk of the gains achieved in Cuba without having his figure present.

As a guide, Fidel has undertaken an exceptional labor. The fact that this man has united the people in one sole cause signifies that he is a great human architect, as he has made all Cubans feel as if they are part of one sole body, one sole heart.

## A FASCINATING MAN

WOLE SOYINKA, NIGERIAN WRITER, NOBEL  
LITERATURE PRIZE LAUREATE

Fidel Castro is a fascinating man who has a great passion for the African continent. He is very well informed on the situation in Nigeria. Every time I meet him his stature increases for me. We are not talking now of liberation movements, we are talking of the health of the masses, education and other projects undertaken in Cuba that have served as a model for other nations.

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## REACHING A GREAT DOORWAY

WOLFGANG LARRAZÁBAL, AN OFFICER  
AND POLITICIAN WHO HEADED THE GOVERNMENT  
EXECUTIVE THAT TOOK POWER  
IN VENEZUELA IN JANUARY 1958

For me, from the sentimental point of view, this meeting has been more emotive than when I received him in Caracas. At that time he had an immense political power. Now, on arriving here, that political power has disappeared and he has treated me with such warmth and affection that I feel really moved.

On embracing him I felt as if I was reaching a great doorway where the shelter and warmth demonstrate that people need that in life to feel more human.

The things that Fidel has include his great humanism. He really feels human contact. For me, my reencounter with him has been a motive for intense joy. It seemed that time had not passed. He looks young, vigorous and dynamic. He is a statesman who comprehends the problems of Cuba and the world.

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## DREAMS

WRIGHT MILLS, U.S. WRITER

We have learnt from Fidel, and we are learning day by day that human beings can go a very long way if they really try. The will to see further and see everything as a whole, to “fly high” as the Yankees say. It might be utopian, but that is what Fidel has taught us and is continually teaching us. To dream and believe that dreams can become reality. Fidel Castro does not promote a cult of the individual, but the facts of the Revolution.

When people take advantage of opportunities they make history; this man has done so.

## WORLD LEADER

YASSER ARAFAT, PRESIDENT OF THE STATE OF  
PALESTINE

With profound emotion we were able to see via the international news agencies the image of Fidel Castro with the Palestinian hatta on his shoulders, heading a popular demonstration of support for the struggle of our heroic people.

I consider that demonstration of unshakeable firmness that took place in Havana a strong and effective message on the part of a beloved world leader who enjoys great international prestige among all the peoples and countries of the world.

From the depths of my heart and that of every Palestinian, I thank him for this valiant position to halt the Israeli aggression of our people, their homeland and sacred Christian and Islamic places, and affirm that every Palestinian is conserving in his or her heart today this glorious image of Your Excellency with the Palestinian hatta on his shoulders, irrefutable evidence of the justice of our cause.

## HE'S NOT GOING TO ABANDON YOU

Hell, stay firm, don't betray the homeland! Don't fail the *Comandante*, and don't worry, he isn't going to abandon you.

Spontaneous comment by a Marielito<sup>15</sup> in a Miami Court in support of the five Cuban patriots unjustly charged in that city, and related by Gerardo Hernández—one of the accused—in a letter sent to his family on February 1, 2001; read out by Randy Alonso on the TV Roundtable, June 22, 2001.

15. A Cuban who left the country via the port of Mariel in 1980. *Trans.*

## PROFOUNDLY PEDAGOGIC\*

JOSÉ ANTONIO BARROSO, MAYOR OF PUERTO  
REAL, SPAIN

Possibly one of Fidel's fundamental characteristics is his vast confidence in the Cuban people, his revolutionary capacity, and his capacity of resistance to adversity, or attacks from his great enemy, the United States. I believe that is a mutual confidence that would be difficult to repeat, and absolutely impossible in capitalist societies. The revolution has been a long road of identification. What is surprising is that there is a mutual confidence, direct, within a dynamic relationship: Fidel learning from the people and the people learning from Fidel.

It is a relation of leadership established on something very important and very profound: a collective project and a sentiment linked to that. If anything characterizes Fidel it is his belief in the need for a social, socialist and humanist project, egalitarian, culturally rich, participative and respectful of nature. Fidel is in a constant dialogue with the people in terms of that idea and its relation to reality.

\*. Opinion written specially for this English edition, on October 27, 2003.



Fidel's idea of "the people" is not in the least rhetorical, it refers to the concrete working people, with their needs, with their shortages, with their capacity for struggle and cooperation, with their weaknesses.

Fidel has a vast confidence in human beings' capacity to create a world of solidarity based on a program of the real guarantee of human rights for all. Thus another of the Cuban leader's characteristics is his immense perseverance.

Fidel has a high concept of potential human dignity. He thinks that that human dignity has the potential to become a reality through collective and cooperative effort.

Fidel extends this confidence in the simple people, in the working classes, to the whole of Latin America. Fidel has restored the spirit of Bolívar and Martí and, via Martí, has assumed Cuba's role as a vanguard and Latin American frontier against U.S. imperialism.

Fidel has endowed that Latin American sentiment with a sense of class that is much more precise—socialism—and some of the values of the Left at the beginning of the 21st century. Fidel has always held a dialogue with Latin America's peoples, and through them, with the peoples of the impoverished and deprived South.

Fidel has always sustained that Socialism is the social system that guarantees human beings' liberation and the end of exploitation.

Even in the worst moments after the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Fidel has never lost this second basic confidence, his confidence in Socialism. Fidel has constantly observed the global processes of capitalism at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, and has analyzed and circulated these processes with great precision and a capacity for adapting theory to the changes toward a neoliberal capitalism of large multinational companies.

Within this analysis the study of the processes of power occupies a fundamental place. Imperialism as it appears today, unmasked and brutal, has been perfectly analyzed by Fidel and the Cuban political leadership in recent decades.

Fidel has also been a persevering and acute observer of social movements, protests and popular mobilizations, of class struggles throughout the world and particularly in Latin America.

He has always interpreted them with courage. The truth has never made Fidel afraid.

For Fidel, solidarity—genuine, valiant and always possible for Cuba even during the special period, even in the worst moments and cycles

of the blockade—has been another of the weapons and components of internationalism.

Fidel is a leader who is constantly learning. Little by little, his political discourse has formed and adapted itself to new realities. Hence his astounding political youth. In the last few years, Fidel, the political leadership and the people of Cuba have been capable of rescuing and profoundly updating revolutionary discourse, relieving it of rhetoric and dogmatism.

Fidel's leadership is profoundly pedagogic, deliberately pedagogic and in this sense radically distinct from all the politicians in the capitalist countries.

Fidel has nothing of the demagogue. He does not conceal the difficulties; he does not conceal the errors. He is a leader who is very firm in his convictions but is never dogmatic. Reality comes into headlong collision with that image constructed by counterrevolutionary propaganda on the slogan "Socialism or Death" with which Fidel has expressed Cuba's intention not to give up his social project despite U.S. aggression and threats.

Fidel is a revolutionary who does not negotiate with political discourse. Fidel has vast historical knowledge and also an enormous sense of history as a process.



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