

With Fidel, yesterday, today, and always

By Angel Guerra Cabrera, September 1, 2016

Sources: <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2016/09/01/opinion/024a1mun> and [http://www.rebelion.org/noticia.php?id=216223&titular=con-fidel-ayer-hoy-y-siempre-\(iii-y-final\)-](http://www.rebelion.org/noticia.php?id=216223&titular=con-fidel-ayer-hoy-y-siempre-(iii-y-final)-)

Fidel Castro was the first chief of state to interest himself in what today many studies call climate collapse and in gaining a clear vision of its basic causes. That's why his words at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, almost a quarter century ago, sound so real [today].

He affirmed on that occasion: "Consumer societies are chiefly responsible for this appalling environmental destruction. They were spawned by the former colonial metropolis. They are the offspring of imperial policies which, in turn, brought forth the backwardness and poverty that have become the scourge for the great majority of humankind. With only 20% of the world's population, they consume two thirds of all metals and three-fourths of the energy produced worldwide. They have poisoned the seas and the rivers. They have polluted the air. They have weakened and perforated the ozone layer. They have saturated the atmosphere with gases, altering climatic conditions with the catastrophic effects." He then stated: "Tomorrow will be too late."

And he added: "If we want to save humanity from this self-destruction, wealth and available technologies must be distributed better throughout the planet. If there were less luxury and less waste in a few countries, there would be less poverty and hunger in much of the world. Stop transferring to the third world lifestyles and consumer habits that ruin the environment. Make human life more rational. Adopt a just international economic order. Use science to achieve sustainable development without pollution. Pay the ecological debt. Eradicate hunger and not humanity."

He was throwing out a question loaded with irony. Now with the passage of time it confirms the hypocrisy and double standards they've used to justify previous imperialist wars, including the cold war, and those they've ceaselessly launched since then against so many peoples in the world. [They are the ones who]"bear fundamental responsibility" for climate change.

This was the question: "When the supposed threats of communism disappeared and now there no longer remain any pretexts for cold wars, arms races, and military expenses, what is there to immediately prevent the dedicating of those resources to development in the third world and resistance against the threat of the ecological destruction of the planet?"

Fidel has denounced tirelessly, but they've continued adding to budgets for war and done very little that is really substantive about the main causes that would stop and reverse environmental contamination and the climate change associated with it.

The struggle for peace has been a constant in his life. This became evident during the missile crisis in October 1962, when it was demonstrated that the struggle isn't for peace at any price but for a peace with justice and dignity.

Twenty years later, in 1981, on [he was asserting](#): "We don't accept, nor ever will accept, the idea that a world holocaust is inexorable." (1)

Continuing with that speech, he stated that, "The intelligence of humankind indeed faces enormous challenges. Peace is only the first condition ... so that all humanity, and not just one part of it, can live in an honorable way ... Peace is indispensable ... for the great battle against underdevelopment ... sicknesses ... illiteracy ... and the growing scarcity of foods, raw materials, energy, and water that now constitute an anguishing problem for hundreds of millions of human beings in the poorest parts of the world."

That connoisseur - like few others - of the aggressive nature of imperialism advised then that, "We struggle for the right to a peaceful life for our people inasmuch as every day we are making ourselves stronger and more invulnerable against any enemy aggression whatsoever."

Peace in Colombia is an old longing to which he's dedicated not a little effort. That's why the historical peace accords reached by the government of that country and the FARC, beyond highlighting the worthiness of the two protagonists, will doubtlessly be inscribed in Fidel's legacy. They irrefutably confirm the traditional Cuban vocation for peace and the growing trust Cuba has earned. For example, Cuba brought two irreconcilable adversaries together in the hospitality of its capital and over the course of years created a climate favorable to their reaching an understanding.

Nevertheless, today a grave threat looms over peace and stability in our region through the counteroffensive by the United States and the oligarchies against progressive governments. With their "soft" coups they have just brought down the legal government of President Dilma Rousseff and this very day they are at the throat of Bolivarian Venezuela.

What the example of Fidel teaches us, up against a dramatic situation like this, is to struggle without let-up and with boundless faith in victory, like those 300 guerillas in the Sierra Maestra who defeated an offensive of ten thousand soldiers of the dictator Batista. Fidel said: "Here, no one surrenders!"

Angel Guerra Cabrera's contribution appeared both in La Jornada, a Mexican newspaper, and with modifications on [rebellion.org](#). This translation by Tom Whitney combines the two versions.

1. Translator's note: This section is taken from Fidel Castro's speech closing the meeting of the World Peace Council in Havana, April 21, 1981. For an English version of the complete speech go to: <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1981/19810421.html>