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Cuba on the eve of an exceptional Party Congress

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Photo: Bill Hackwell

Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro's last address to the Cuban people was in May 2016, during the 7th Congress of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC). "Leading a country in times of crisis requires a superhuman effort," he said.

Before nearly 1,000 PCC members, Fidel foresaw that it would be "the last time I speak in this room." "Representing the people must be the greatest honor a militant could ever receive in life, besides the privilege of being a revolutionary, which is a result of our own conscience," he added.

In 2016, Cuba was moving forward in the economic and social reform process that

would allow the island to shake off the crisis caused by Washington's half-century-long blockade. "The course is set. We will proceed at a steady pace, without haste, but without pause," then-President Raul Castro said on that occasion.

The 7th Congress coincided with the onset of the reestablishment of the diplomatic relations between Cuba and the U.S., the opening of embassies in both capitals, and the arrival of cruise ships and thousands of tourists eager to get closer to the Cuban culture and reality. The construction of prosperous, sustainable, and irreversible socialism seemed a little simpler on the island after the apparent cessation of hostilities that marked the neighboring country's successive administrations.

However, the event also coincided with the start of the presidential campaigns in the U.S., where it was uncertain what would happen after the November 3, 2016 elections. Republican candidate Donald Trump won the presidency against all odds. His anti-communist diatribes and the contempt he professed towards the Cubans on the island and their government increased his popularity in South Florida, the cradle of Cuban emigration and the place from where innumerable attacks against the island have been organized and financed.

The following five years were very difficult for Cuba's economic development. Trump imposed 242 new sanctions, reversed the few steps forward promoted by Barack Obama's administration, tightened the blockade, and pursued more viciously those countries that dared trade with Cuba.

Despite these setbacks, Cuba undertook the unstoppable march about which Fidel and Raul spoke so much during the 7th Congress, "perfecting all that we must improve, with meridian loyalty, and united strength, as the main leaders of the independence battles did back in the 1860s."

Today, Cubans are on the doorstep of a new PCC Congress with an economy battered by the aftermath of the Trump regime and the impact of the pandemic.

In Cuba, over 400 people have died from the disease. The numbers could have been much higher if the government had not managed to daily circumvent the obstacles of the blockade and prioritize scientific development.

"We will attend the 8th Party Congress in the midst of the pandemic, with very favorable results compared to other much more developed countries, and with five domestic vaccines in clinical trials, and with the highest rate of recovered patients in Latin America," President Miguel Diaz-Canel said.

This will be an exceptional Congress, not only because it will take place amid an unprecedented global health crisis. For the first time in 62 years, a member of the historic generation will not be heading the main political organization of the Revolution.

The important meeting, which will take place from April 16 to 19 in Havana, will happen exactly 60 years after the Giron Beach invasion. The Bay of Pigs (as the invasion is known in the US) was a historic failure for the US government's military efforts to take over the island.

As of this Friday, Cuba will live another milestone. A new generation of Party members will assume leadership from the Revolution's historic generation. Although no abrupt changes in policy are expected, the new leadership will ratify the continuity and unity of the revolutionary process in Cuba.

The decision taken in the previous Party Congress to place an age limit on membership in the PCC Central Committee (60) and on leadership positions (70) will be keenly felt this Congress. The passing of the torch to a new generation of Party members will stimulate the systematic rejuvenation of its entire militancy.

"Minute by minute, time is inexorably ticking away and shortening our lives. With these changes, we are repairing our Revolution's great leader of today, tomorrow,

and always: our Communist Party,” Raul Castro said in May 2016.

Fidel agreed. “Death will come for all of us, but the ideas of Cuban communists will remain as proof that, if we work with fervor and dignity, we can produce the material and cultural goods that human beings need. We must transmit to our Latin American and worldwide brothers and sisters that the Cuban people will win.” Those were his last words in the Congress.

Source: [Resumen Latinoamericano - English](#)

