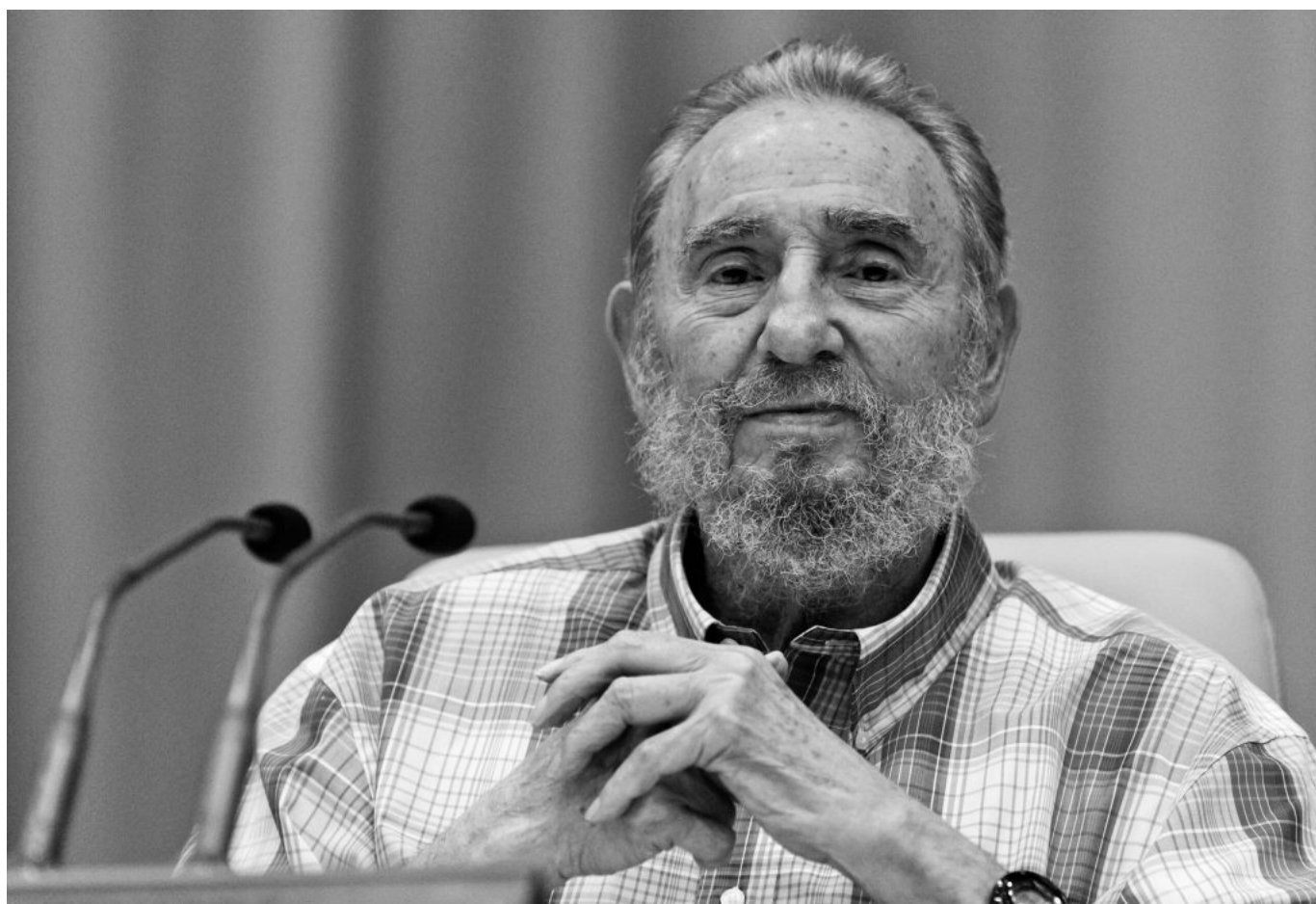# Cuba keeps achieving the impossible thanks to Fidel's legacy

written by Alejandra Garcia
August 13, 2021

Fidel Castro. Photo: Roberto Chile

In 1969, Cuba achieved the impossible: the manufacture of the first micro-computer prototype on record in the Third World, the CID-201. That device, which did 25,000 sums per second and had a capacity of 4 kilowords -equal to 1024 words-, was a small step forward for science on the island.

Fidel (1926-2016) was the dreamer behind the creation of that minuscule creature — the rest of the machines used at the time were huge. Despite its technological limitations, it was mass-produced and used in companies, schools, and universities.

The idea arose during a visit to the University of Havana by Erwin Roy John, a pioneer in neurosciences in the U.S. During a long conversation with the eminent scientist, the Cuban leader's anxiousness about the possibility of Cuba building its computer was noted on several occasions.

Roy John insisted that this would not be possible in Cuba for one reason that still rumbles: the U.S. blockade against the island. This policy applied almost immediately after the triumph of the Revolution in 1959 preventing Cubans from acquiring the necessary components to launch the project.

"The scientist proposed to the Chief of the Revolution a more modest and realistic plan: to produce calculators," commented Dr. Jose Miyar Barruecos, alias Chomi, the revolutionary doctor, former Rector of the University of Havana, and Fidel's secretary for over four decades.

This suggestion did not discourage Fidel, who secretly motivated a group of engineers from the then University City Jose Antonio Echeverria (CUJAE) to achieve the impossible.

The project's engineers Luis Carrasco and Orlando Ramos traveled to Europe and Japan to purchase the components of the device that the commercial fence

prevented them from importing.

Carrasco and Ramos gave shape and form to the CID-201 in just a few months. In 1970, engineer Rafael Valls developed software to allow a person to play endgame chess with the microcomputer. There were kings, rooks, bishops, and some pawns.

On April 18 of that year, the Chief of the Revolution confronted the CID-201. He spent over an hour battling with the machine and, as Fidel never accepted defeat, he only left it alone when he gave it checkmate, Chomi recounted.

With the CID-201, Cuba was ahead of the region in the technological world. Fidel overcame "the poor situation" in which the Latin American countries found themselves in amidst the information and Internet boom the rest of the world was experiencing.

"That brilliant world of knowledge and image exchange is still strange and forbidden to our countries," the leader said in 1999 when the island had already created dozens of scientific centers, a minicomputer factory, and the Computer Palaces.

Twenty years later, his words still hold true. The Internet has an owner, the United States, and Washington uses it as a weapon of hate against the island.

This week, the U.S. State Department claimed once again that Cuba denies its citizens access to information and launched an amendment calling for "free access to the Internet in Cuba" through a fund to facilitate this "open and uncensored" service.

Cuban Foreign Affairs Minister Bruno Rodriguez condemned the new aggression, "which contributes to the lucrative business of the political-subversive machinery in Florida. The blockade is the fundamental obstacle to the Cuban people's free and sovereign access to the Internet."

In this scenario, Cuba will continue to achieve the impossible, as the young engineers of the CID-201 did in 1969. We will be independent, which does not mean only having a flag, an anthem, or a symbol. We are accustomed to working around the blockade to achieve our accomplishments. If it intensifies we will work harder. "Independence relies on development, on technology, on science in today's world. We will move towards that goal," said Fidel, who would have been 95 years old today.

Source: [Resumen Latinoamericano – English](#)