

Fidel's guidance in all of Cuba's struggles

written by Alejandra Garcia
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Fidel. Photo: Roberto Chile

Havana, Aug. 11 — These days Cuba is recovering from an unprecedented fire, which has kept Matanzas, the whole island, and especially rescuers, firefighters, and authorities on full alert since the night of August 5. The continuous explosions in one of the main oil storage facilities in the country left a trail of thick black smoke that covered the Havana sky for five days. It also left so far two deaths, 14 people missing, and over a hundred people injured. Now that the flames have been extinguished the next phase of clean up will begin and it will start with finding the remains of those brave firefighters who threw themselves immediately into battle for their homeland.

However, amid pain and agony, Cuba has one great consolation: since 1959, the people have never been alone in struggles, accidents, or catastrophes of any kind. Fidel never permitted it. Today, when the island is just 2 days away from remembering the 96th anniversary of his birth, the 6th that has passed without his physical presence, the people proved once again that his ideas and his example do not abandon them.

In the most uncertain moments of the fight to put out the fire, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermudez mentioned, again and again, a phrase well known to Cubans: “The protection of our citizens will always occupy the first place in our efforts. Nothing will have priority over this.”

Fidel repeated those same words in March 2003, a few months after two powerful hurricanes, Lili and Isidore, crossed the island in September 2002, both of which had an almost identical path, coming barely 11 days between one another.

“In the face of climate changes, the environmental damage caused by humankind, economic crises, epidemics and cyclones, our material, scientific and technical resources are increasingly abundant,” he added.

Cuba had already lived through other extreme experiences at that time. Hurricane Flora, for example, passed over the island in October 1963 and is remembered for its heavy rains, which overflowed rivers, ruined crops, and destroyed houses. More than 1,150 people died during that violent five-day storm, as well as thousands of animals.

According to Bohemia, Fidel directed the relief operations and moved from one province to another. First Santa Clara, then Camagüey, and even into the most dangerous area of the Cauto River.

“The Commander-in-Chief of the Revolution was, as always, in the front line. It was not uncommon to see him personally organizing rescue brigades, attending to the victims, sharing the pain of the people,” the magazine reported.

Fidel Castro was on the front line of the catastrophe, even during the battering of the winds and waters, even though the historic hurricane had not yet left the eastern province within which it performed several loops while trapped by the mountains.

The leader of the Revolution moved there with amphibious tanks of the Rebel Army and he personally saved many victims who remained on the roofs, the top of trees, or those who were trapped in the floodwaters. The helicopters fought against the heavy winds, taking advantage of every space of calm to save entire families.

All the victims received material assistance. The enormous damage was mitigated and everything was rebuilt. No family was left behind.

Since 2016, the year Fidel died, Cuba has faced other situations of great pain: Hurricane Irma (2016), the plane crash at José Martí International Airport (2018), and the tornado that destroyed hundreds of houses in Havana (2019), an unprecedented pandemic, a raging fire...

But Cuban leaders continue Fidel’s legacy. From the checkpoint stationed a few

kilometers from the fire, after it was made known that the flames were already under control, Díaz-Canel took a few minutes to recall – as he does every day – some words of the man who remains and will remain present in each of our struggles: “Our people will be able to overcome any obstacle, any difficulty; our people will be able to march forward unstoppable, and they will be able to overcome their own weaknesses.”

Source: [Resumen Latinoamericano-US](#)

In commemoration of Fidel's birthday on August 13 we present Estela Bravo's



extraordinary documentary,

Fidel the Untold Story

