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‘We are going to build a better world!’ Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel tells North American youth

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Manolo De Los Santos and Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel.

On the last day of the “Let Cuba Live” Youth Brigade, organized by the International Peoples’ Assembly in the first week of June, the members of the brigade met with Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel to discuss the pressing issues facing humanity, the lessons from waging a socialist revolution, and how to maintain hope. This



conversation was recorded as part of the podcast.

president’s new

“Down with the blockade! The socialist world is the world we want!” shouted the over 100 young people gathered in the Palace of the Revolution.

“We had to come to Cuba to find ourselves and our struggle,” said Manolo De Los Santos, director of the People’s Forum and social leader in the United States, who moderated the conversation. “For us, it is a pleasure to share with young people from North America...We admire you a lot,” Díaz-Canel told the young activists.

He affirmed this because in his opinion, they have built an impressive social and political movement in the United States which channels the righteous feelings of justice, freedom, and emancipation which exist in North American society through these young people.

Memories

Díaz-Canel told them that he will never forget “the support that young people like you gave us in New York,” a place where Cuba has so many times denounced the imperial blockade that grips it. And he returned to the hours of September 2023, when he went out to the corner of Lexington and 38th – in front of the Cuban mission in New York City – to demand, in the middle of a demonstration of young Americans, the end of the blockade.

“You were in the streets every day,” the president acknowledged when referring to the brave youth. And another moment emerged with strength and clarity in the memory of the dignitary: on Saturday September 23, 2023, a rainy night at the New York Society for Ethical Culture, where hundreds of friends gathered in support of a nation that resists.

It was there where that the Cuban leader stated that Cuba embraces the American people and all brothers and sisters in the world who dream of a better world. Being able to share that night with friends was, he said, an “extraordinary experience.”

The beginning of an unforgettable conversation

“Welcome to the Palace of the Revolution, and let’s talk like you young people do,” the President said. Manolo De Los Santos, who introduced each student who spoke, was emphatic: “We are extremely grateful to the people of Cuba for receiving us during these times.”

De Los Santos highlighted that, although these are difficult times, the people of Cuba have not stopped showing solidarity, not only with them but also with the entire world.

“It has been an intense week,” said Manolo about the group’s stay in the Greater Antilles, “where we have recognized the ability of the Cuban people to talk about all topics, everything. We have been up late into the night, discussing democracy, human rights, economics, philosophy, culture, everything. And of course, dancing a little with the Cubans.”

“We do that very well,” commented President Díaz-Canel smiling. And Manolo shared another idea: “How rare this opportunity, for young Americans, to be able to meet with a President.... We have been mobilizing in the United States for months, demanding that our President listen to us, and today we woke up seeing a White House surrounded, fenced, impossible to reach; But here we arrive in Cuba and a revolutionary, socialist, honest, human President welcomes us openly and wants to listen to our questions.”

“The world cannot remain silent,” the Cuban president stressed in the initial moments. He did so categorically and in the face of evidence of the holocaust suffered by the Palestinian people.

Is it the same Revolution?

Ask anything and raise your criticisms, the Head of State said and added, “for the Cuban people it will be very good to know how young people like you think.”

“This is a small but very resilient nation,” said Palestinian organizer Celine Qussiny. For her, the imperial blockade causes Cuba to face many problems. It is a siege, she denounced, set up by the same government that attacks Palestine.

Next, the group asked: This Revolution – which did not begin in 1959 but much earlier – how has it evolved over the last 60 years?

Understanding the magnitude of what was raised, President Díaz-Canel said that the answer could be either very long or very short, but that he would strive to give it from an intermediate point. There began his journey to the beginnings of Cuban nationality, even to previous stages, when Columbus arrived in America and opened the doors to clashes of identity, to subsequent exterminations of the Indigenous populations, to the shameful chapter of the slave trade, to the emergence of Creole which begins to feel Cuban and not Spanish, at the birth of a desire for independence that has always been closely linked to the very emergence of national identity.

The President went through stages such as the Mambisas wars; everything done by the Caribbean country -already in the 20th century- for the sake of independence causes in Africa, because that commitment to the mother continent has to do with the vindication of the slaves who arrived on Cuban soil tied up in ships and whose blood flows through the veins of today’s Cubans.

Díaz-Canel spoke about Martí; of Antonio Maceo and his protest in Mangos de Baraguá; of the Centennial Generation with Fidel at the head; of the assault on the Moncada Barracks; from prison and exile in Mexico; of the incorporation of Che Guevara to the group of those who would later disembark on the Granma Yacht; of

Fidel saying, with only seven rifles in hand, that then they would win the war against an army armed to the teeth.

Regarding that last episode, the president recalled that Cuba, in a line with a flavor of destiny, has tended to go from adversity to adversity, and from triumph to triumph, always without losing from its horizon, a Fidelista conviction, inherited from all previous struggles: “What there can never be is surrender,” Díaz-Canel conceptualized.

As Commander in Chief Fidel Castro also defined at the time, and as the current Head of State recalled, the Cuban Revolution is one, from the Mambisas to today.

When that Revolution triumphed, he said, that was a cause of great concern for the United States. And regarding such an event – blocked by the empire for so long – the president stressed that revolutions can set an example but cannot be exported, because “revolutions are made by the people.” Hence, he emphasized to the students, no one can influence them, no one guides them in the convictions they choose.

“We are not perfect nor do we want you to idealize us,” Díaz-Canel told the young people; and he added that what Cuban revolutionaries do have is an enormous vocation for perfection.

Regarding the youth of the Caribbean country, the dignitary expressed that they are present in all important events and processes in society. He listed several examples in this regard; and he affirmed that the Revolution is a story of continuity of generations that are united in principles; that may be distant from each other, due to time, but that are mutually supported by a unity of essences.

“We are going to build a better world!”

How does Cuba view the liberation process of Palestine? the young people asked. And that was the starting point for the President to affirm that the world has woken up at this moment in history, starting with the Palestinian cause.

It is as if, he reflected, the market had spread a blanket of idiocy over societies. Thus he spoke about a world marked by uncertainty, by the adverse climate situation, by increased inequalities after COVID-19, and by wars.

Another question that invited everyone to reflect: Palestine has suffered a war of more than 70 years, why is it not talked about and only Ukraine provokes concern? Why don't the mainstream media go to the root causes of the conflict in Europe? Who caused this conflict in Ukraine? Who manufactured that war? Who benefits from it?

Regarding what is happening with the Palestinian people, President Díaz-Canel reflected on how so many human beings have died in such a short time. He devoted special attention to the martyrdom of women and children; and he wondered aloud: What could be in the conscience of those who have waged that war?

Palestine causes us pain, it has to affect us, he said, to assert that in that land, its children are defending human dignity. "I think that everything we do for Palestine is too little," he stressed; and he imagined the moment when that nation must be rebuilt, and spoke about the pain of broken families, of mothers and fathers who have lived the terrible experience of seeing their children die.

Palestine opened an important space of consciousness; and in that the protests of American students have been very important. Díaz-Canel Bermúdez said, who did not overlook the fact that since the days of protests against the war in Vietnam, such intense demonstrations had not been experienced in North America.

The president confessed to the young people that he was among the idealists who

imagined a better world after the heartbreak caused by COVID-19, because the systems “broke so much...”. But sadly – the president noted – the world went to war, the blockades tightened, and governments like the Israeli one have manifested themselves brutally against the Palestinian people.

We want a better world, where there is more equality, a more just world; That world is possible, what we have to do is defend it. This is how the Head of State reflected, who added that the world is defended as Cubans do every day, despite the blockade; and as do the Palestinian people.

“We are going to build a better world!” the president declared firmly and optimistically.

Fostering revolutionary optimism in the toughest of times

How do you deal with pessimism; How to create optimism in such difficult moments? Manolo De Los Santos asked President Díaz-Canel. And that was the launching pad for the dignitary to list many of the problems that affect life in Cuba; among them, the lack of medicines and food, blackouts, shortages of all kinds...

“And one says: we have to show our faces, we have to be in the streets,” said the Head of State, to then explain why in “the history of our country there are the answers to all our problems.”

The essence of his rationale was that we must “believe in history,” because Cuban history has been and is the fight against all adversity and in the midst of permanent attacks.

The other path that the President spoke about to respond to current challenges is ethics – “the truth must be explained,” he said; and the third element – he stressed – is what is fair, the Law.

The imperialist logic that is based on economic and media suffocation was also explained in detail by the dignitary, who expressed that “we fight here every day,” and that the logic of socialist construction takes precedence over the adversary’s plan. This consists of overcoming the blockade with one’s own effort and talent, with the philosophy of creative resistance, which consists of going beyond resistance to aspire to growth.

The priorities of the Party and the Government for the current times; the unforgettable story of how Cuban scientists saved an entire people from COVID-19 - and they did it with their own vaccines-; normative processes within society. The president spoke with the young people about such experiences; and when Manolo De Los Santos asked him how he explains to the people how complicated these moments are, he was emphatic: “With the truth, Manolo, with the truth.” He added that there is no more effective formula than the one-on-one exchange, as Fidel and Army General Raúl Castro Ruz taught.

Questions about hope

How to make the future part of the hope of young people in Cuba? What are the main issues being debated today in the spheres of the Communist Party and the Government?

Based on these questions asked by the young people, the Head of State continued sharing reflections alluding to the value of ideas, and all the effort deployed by the Revolution in social projects; and among the essential topics that are discussed, he said, is that of generational continuity.

Regarding the latter, Díaz-Canel Bermúdez made reference to the challenge of maintaining continuity despite the fact that current generations are already far away, in the timeline, from January 1, 1959. And he spoke of other cardinal

challenges: “How to ensure that Fidel always remains among us? How to ensure that all the revolutionary epic, all the greatness, is not lost?”

“We can win, but we have to believe it,” said the Cuban President at another point in the meeting, and also warned that it will be a long fight, and that there will even be generations who will not see the fruits of the effort, but who will have created the conditions for the triumph of future generations.

The afternoon in the Portocarrero Hall – the same space where Fidel took his long steps so many times – was full of emotions and very useful truths. Among many other certainties, Díaz-Canel expressed that “what the people defend is what triumphs.”

Manolo De Los Santos – who had already called the blockade suffered by Cuba a “silent genocide” – told the hosts at the Palace of the Revolution about a week full of emotions, about dialogues with young Cubans who “are not robots”, who have a very critical speech. And he told about the experience of having walked through the streets and being able to taste the feeling of freedom.

“Cuba for us is also what Palestine means. It is the flag of our generation,” said the director of the People’s Forum, who did not let the day pass without first giving, very heartfelt, thanks. The social leader assured that with them – the young people who have made headlines around the world for their protests and the way in which they have been mistreated – they will share about Cuba, the Revolution and its leaders. And that is how it will be today, tomorrow, and always.

Source: [Peoples Dispatch](#)

