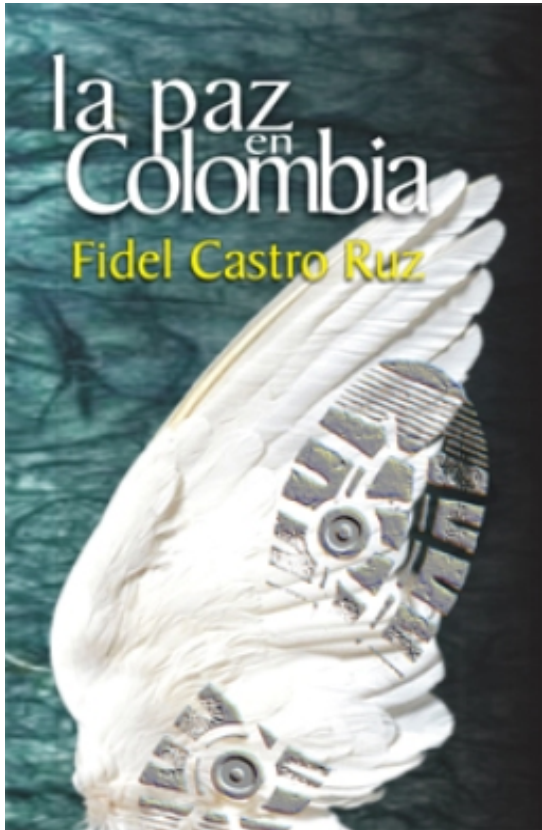


THE ETHICAL REVELATIONS OF FIDEL CASTRO



“Peace in Colombia” by Fidel Castro Ruz. The title and the author’s name would be enough to turn this into the most widely sought-after and read book these days throughout the world. Just looking at the excellent presentation of this publication by Editora Política leads one to imagine that its pages are a treasury of the personal opinions of the extraordinary statesman who writes about a complex and dark chapter in our times and region.

What cannot be revealed by a glance at the cover is what this book is in reality: nothing less than a vital half-century slice of contemporary history, narrated by one of its fundamental protagonists, possessing all the charm of a novel, while being absolutely true to facts.

Here we have, with all the meticulously detailed notes by way of reports and documents, unpublished until today, everything we have ever wanted to know about the internal workings of the negotiations between the various Colombian governments and the leadership of the Cuban Revolution, with or without diplomatic relations, in order to remove the impediments to peace talks, rescue hostages and even to avoid massacres, as the ones that might have taken place as a result of the plan of the Julio César Turbay Ayala government to storm the Dominican Embassy, taken in the first months of 1980 by an M-19 commando group.

The book’s 16 chapters, including introduction and epilogue, contain significant revelations and they document, for the first time, events that were scattered throughout press clippings or which remained in sparsely circulated books, unknown to many.

Other chapters, for example, where two officials of the Party Central Committee Department for the Americas told the Leader of the Revolution about the incredible story of the kidnapping and rescue of

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Juan Carlos Gaviria, brother of the former President César Gaviria and at that time (1996) the OAS Secretary General, have all the appeal of an absolute novelty, with a touch of magical realism, that Fidel himself reveals as “Fictional Incidents”.

From the Yankee conspiracies against Cuba in the OAS and the two Declarations of Havana - has anyone ever before noticed what huge political and literary works these are? - to the San Vicente del Caguán peace talks, the book takes us back to locations and circumstances that are apparently well-known, but which acquire new meaning once and for all under the light shed by a political analyst of the author's calibre, and the serious top-notch researchers and witnesses quoted by him, such as Arturo Alape the El Bogatazo chronicler, Jacobo Arenas the Communist leader, Manuel Marulanda the legendary guerrilla leader and Andrés Pastrana the former President.

Written in the direct and categorical style of his Reflections, “Peace in Colombia” surpasses them in length and structure, but especially in the manner in which that invaluable personal testimony combines with other more or less public testimonies by the story's co-protagonists.

Only a political and military strategist like Fidel Castro, who was involved from the beginning and with his emotions in the events he is narrating, could put together such a consistent ensemble from fragments extracted out of that diversity of authors and sources nourishing the various chapters, without detracting or ignoring any of the parties while at the same time staying true to his steadfast convictions.

Thus, the oldest guerrilla movement and the most protracted and violent conflict in Latin America are no longer perceived as a wretched circumstance, but are presented to us with their background and precedents, their causes and consequences, from the viewpoint of the most seasoned combatant and indisputable continental revolutionary leader.

The author confesses in the epilogue that he put more than 400 hours of intense work into the 265 pages with the quoted revelations, and many more, about the ties of the Cuban Revolution to Latin America's other important revolutionary movements.

But if it comes to choosing any one of its parts as the synthesis and summary, “The Value of Principles” could be defined as the very essence and maybe then we would be sure that, more than a book, this is a beautiful and unmatched lesson in history and ethics.

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