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[Fidel: A necessary presence](#)



This last year we have seen you riding, as an invincible warrior, into combat against an epidemic, the consequences of which you anticipated, with your vision of future, when you filled the island with doctors and research centers to confront - with science - the many diseases that would appear over time.

You knew that it would be poor countries that would be the most affected and made much-needed solidarity a fundamental banner of the Revolution, unfortunately little practiced where selfishness and greed prevail under the name of neo-liberalism.

Although you left for another dimension, you are leading the current battles, from the depths of a rock extracted from the mountains of your Sierra Maestra. We confirm how necessary you are - perhaps indispensable.

But the current year of 2020, four years after we accompanied you to immortality, has been singular, given the challenges, the battles fought, the action of a people who know you are present, who saw and felt you in every effort undertaken, on every front, in every victory achieved and every adversity faced.

I can imagine how you would feel knowing that a doctor or nurse, of those tens of thousands you saw trained, today face, there in the red zone or in the rear of a hospital, doctor's office or polyclinic, a terrible pandemic that has endangered all of humanity.

What would you say when those who by the thousands departed to confront Covid-19 in other lands around the world, making a reality of that phrase you repeated so many times, "We do not give away what we have left over; we share what we have."

How present you have been at the Finlay Vaccine Institute, among those who have set out to make your teaching a reality and to produce the candidate vaccines Sovereign 01 and 02, to combat the pandemic not only in Cuba, but making them available to the entire world, to the poorest countries.

How many times have you visited the exemplary Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology Center, and how many times have you discussed the role of science in the development of our homeland, with workers, doctors, scientists?

You are recalled here and now, within every institution located in the Scientific Pole. Working there are many of those who shook your hand, those who answered your questions, those who accepted the challenge you posed to undertake the necessary work of those who cannot wait, over time and with quality.

When I see the thousands of members of the Henry Reeve Contingent brigades depart and return victorious, I am reminded of the first health professionals organized to offer solidarity abroad.

Today, more than ever, your thoughts are present, as expressed in the constitution of this medical contingent: "We have shown that human beings can and must be better. We demonstrate the value of conscience and ethics. We offer lives."

I remember the time in May of 2001, when I participated as a journalist in your visit to Algeria, the meetings with leaders and professionals of that nation, who were always grateful for the honor of being the first to receive a Cuban medical brigade, just a few months after that nation achieved its independence.

On May 24, 1963, a group of 58 health professionals departed to Algeria, including 32 doctors, four dentists, 14 nurses and eight technicians who worked in different parts of the country for some 18 months.

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Nor can I forget Barbados, when in December 2005, you spoke to Caribbean leaders at the Cuba-CARICOM Summit, and referred to Operation Miracle that had saved the vision of so many in these small countries. You were moved by what leaders like Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, said, who, with tears in his eyes, thanked you for Cuba's great solidarity with the world's most needy.

Today, when you are not physically present among us, you continue to be a daily reference that marks a human work of extraordinary magnitude.

This is why, across the Caribbean, you are remembered and venerated, in the countries of Africa, in a grateful Vietnam, in Latin America where Cuban solidarity, our medical and educational missions, and others, have contributed to millions, saving lives, curing disease, and more millions learning to read and write.

Another battle waged this year, one of those in which you always took the lead, was the battle against tropical storms like Eta, with their devastating impact on agricultural, housing, schools and other institutions. We remember the great flood control works you conceived when a hurricane named Flora, October 3, 1963, struck our country, mainly areas in the present provinces of Las Tunas, Holguín, Granma and Camagüey.

What would have become of our island without the dams, the canals, the reservoirs of various sizes throughout the country, which as you would so often explain, store the water needed for human and agricultural use, and most importantly prevent floods, overflowing rivers and other phenomenon that cost human lives and destroy food crops?

During this year's great battles, like others in previous years, we have had in you, Fidel, an obligatory reference, the example to follow, the lesson that makes every Cuban part of a better present and future for our people.

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