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**Subject:** Fwd: Nicanotes: Guest Blog: Fidel By Tortilla con Sal and the Nicaragua Network

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Cuba/Fidel

What did Cuba do to earn the respect and appreciation from poor countries?

How could such a poor country do so?

Compare and contrast the US foreign aid.

Could we learn anything from this comparison that would make the US more popular?



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NicaNotes is a blog for Nicaragua activists and those interested in Nicaragua, published by the [Nicaragua Network](#), a project of the [Alliance for Global Justice](#). It provides news and analysis from the context of Nicaragua Network's long history of struggle in solidarity with the Sandinista Revolution.

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Due to a temporary health issue I was unable to write this week's blog, nor will I be able to write next week's blog. Thanks to Tortilla con Sal for filling

in this week. Visit their site at [www.tortillaconsal.com](http://www.tortillaconsal.com) for many great articles and analysis in English and Spanish. I'm looking for a Guest Blog for next week. Send me an email at [Chuck@AFGJ.org](mailto:Chuck@AFGJ.org)

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if you would like to write something about either US-Nicaragua relations or about Nicaragua's positive example to the world. — Chuck Kaufman

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## Guest Blog: Fidel

### By Tortilla con Sal and the Nicaragua Network

Fidel's moral example will forever stand as to inspire practical solidarity the world over. Fidel Castro built up and promoted a unique record of relevant, timely solidarity addressing peoples' real needs, doing so in great part through the personal example of his tireless energy and attention to detail. His lifework's universal significance became clear in the days following his death when world leaders wrote to Raúl Castro and the Cuban people sending sincere messages of condolence that went far beyond usual diplomatic protocol.

One example of heart-felt tribute came from the leaders of the ALBA countries:

"The countries of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) profoundly lament the sad physical passing of the Leader of the Cuban Revolution, Commander Fidel Castro Ruz, who was not only the leader of the Cuban Revolution but was also the guide of the progressive movements who achieved power in our region, bringing about a change in the region's politics, and filling the Latin American and Caribbean peoples with hope....

"The ALBA countries want to recognize the giant who was Commander Fidel Castro, one of the principal integrationists of the region where his spirit of solidarity was adopted as a fundamental principle in the process of the formation of the ALBA. Now more than ever this alliance commits itself with greater strength to the struggle for solidarity-based integration among the Latin American and Caribbean peoples....

"The countries of the world owe a great deal to the Cuban people, from the smile of a child cured by the Cuban doctors spread throughout the world bringing health and hope to humanity, to the rifle carried by a Cuban fighting for freedom for the world's people. The fighting spirit of Cuba is everywhere and we must say that the giant who was Commander Fidel Castro is everywhere among humankind. Thank you Cuba, for Fidel."

What explains this tremendous regard for Fidel from world leaders? Sixty years ago, Fidel Castro began the liberation of a small Caribbean island and from there by sheer force of example and unequalled solidarity he and his comrades overcame morally and politically the unprecedented power of Western imperialism, not just in Latin America but in Africa too. Fidel, Che and their comrades effectively liberated two continents thanks to a unique sense of prophetic resistance sustained by an insistence on the principle of self-determination and solidarity among sovereign peoples.

One might argue that Fidel was a great political and military strategist because he understood that to defeat an enemy aggressor the priority must be a capacity to resist, come what may. He saw no need to conquer territory but rather to defend tenaciously and with dignity both the material and moral patrimony of the people. He saw that once imperialist aggression failed, unable to expand, its overall

immoral genocidal greed would condemn capitalism to devour itself. Fidel saw that the most important question facing humanity is whether the world will overcome capitalism before it destroys the planet's ability to support human life.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of the lesson of resistance was Cuba's long solidarity with Angola. In November 1975, Cuban soldiers landed in the airport of Luanda, Angola's capital, arriving just in time to prevent its capture by the forces of apartheid South Africa. Thirteen years later during the long months of the battle of Cuito Cuanavale the resistance of the Cuban and Angolan forces defeated desperate, savage offensives of the South African military supported by the United States and its NATO allies. The combination of the Angolan-Cuban military triumph forced the US and its allies to pressure their racist South African puppets to negotiate a peace. Soon afterwards, in 1990, Nelson Mandela was released and in 1994 South Africa held its first ever free elections, making Mandela President of his country.

Paradoxically, that African and Cuban triumph occurred at the very moment of the collapse of their most important ally, the Soviet Union. The breakup of the communist bloc marked the beginning of another period of extreme sacrifice and hardship for the Cuban people. In that context too, the world learned the tremendous moral educative power of a leadership and people in revolution, capable of resisting the economic and political assault of the most aggressive imperialist power in history. Even in that context, Cuba continued delivering solidarity to the rest of the world via its medical and educational expertise and its inspirational contributions in sport and culture.

To Latin America and to Nicaragua in particular Cuba's solidarity was indispensable in supporting the resistance and overthrow of imperialist backed dictatorships across the region. It is sobering to realize that all the time Cuba was supporting Angola throughout the 1970s and 1980s, it also provided education, training and military support to liberation movements throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, including the Sandinista Front in Nicaragua. Fidel Castro and his comrades encouraged the different ideological currents in the Sandinista National Liberation Front to sink their differences and unite around a common strategy.

Then as the strategic consequences of that strategy unfolded, Cuban diplomacy forged timely alliances with Omar Torrijos in Panama and the government in Costa Rica, making possible a flow of arms to the Sandinista fighters. That military and diplomatic support defeated efforts by US President Carter to install "somocismo without Somoza" in Nicaragua and made possible the revolutionary victory of July 19th 1979. Subsequently, Cuban medical professionals and educators helped the revolutionary government in Nicaragua carry out tremendously successful national literacy and health campaigns. Cuban military training and arms were crucial to enabling Nicaragua's Sandinista government to resist President Ronald Reagan's terrorist Contra war.

After the Sandinistas lost the historic 1990 elections, the example of Fidel and the people of Cuba throughout the 1990s inspired resistance to neoliberalism and its social democrat variants. Regionally, the Sandinista Front was an important battleground in that decisive war of ideas. Daniel Ortega and his compañeros as well as Latin American leaders like Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Evo Morales in Bolivia, and Ignacio Lula da Silva in Brazil all drew strength and resolve from Cuba's example of resistance. Combined with Cuba's unprecedented practical solidarity, that example of resistance fomented the revolutionary love between peoples that enabled Fidel and the Cuban Revolution to overcome their enemies and nurture the progressive initiatives that have transformed Latin America in the 21st Century.

If that unquestionable reality explains the admiration for Fidel of some important world leaders, it also explains the embarrassing incomprehension of all-washed-up Western leaders and their media. Western reactions to Fidel Castro's death confirm the catastrophic moral and intellectual collapse underlying the prolonged apparently irremediable political and economic crisis in Europe and the

United States. Western leaders and intellectuals cannot explain how Cuba, victim of almost sixty years of economic, commercial and financial boycott, still registers higher in the UN Human Development Index than Colombia and Mexico. They cannot give a plausible reason why Cuba in just a few years helped millions of people in Bolivia, Nicaragua and Venezuela read and write while the West's debt-and-aid charade left them illiterate. Nor can they explain how Cuban health care solidarity has rescued the sight, improved the health and saved the lives of many millions of people around the world whom the West left to suffer and die. The recent outbreak of the Ebola virus in West Africa was a stark reminder of Cuba's moral and practical superiority to the US and its allies.

Fidel Castro lived to see the start of a multipolar world based on solidarity, respect for sovereign peoples and the beginning of the end of sterile, destructive Western imperialism. The messages to the Cuban people of world leaders mean that Fidel and the Cuban Revolution, Sandinista Nicaragua and all peoples of good will in the world can look forward with confidence to important new victories for a world of solidarity, peace and justice.

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### **Briefs:**

- At the memorial ceremony in Havana on Nov. 29 honoring Fidel Castro, who died on Nov. 25th, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega spoke of his pain at the loss of the revolutionary leader but said that Castro would live on in the hearts of the Cuban people: "Fidel is in the consciousness and the hearts of the Cuban women, of the workers, of the farmers, of the technicians, the professionals, the scientists." He added that he met Castro for the first time in 1967 when he attended the IV Latin American Student Congress as a member of the FSLN and stood in the Plaza of the Revolution with Castro and Salvador Allende who three years later would become president of Chile. In his speech Ortega highlighted the unconditional support that Cuba gave to the Sandinista Revolution. (Informe Pastran, Nov. 30)
- The National Assembly on Dec. 1 passed the national budget for 2017. Deputy Walmaro Gutierrez, chair of the Committee on Production, Economics and Budget, said that the new budget includes a growth in public investment of 13.8% over 2016 to US\$654 million. Funds to improve the lives of Nicaraguan families, including poverty reduction programs, will increase to US\$1.58 billion. The Zero Hunger Program is expected to reach an additional 33,000 women next year while those benefiting from Zero Usury "solidarity" credits are expected to total over 130,000. Teachers and health care workers will receive salary increases of nine and eight percent respectively while other government employees will receive five percent raises. The government plans to hire 923 more primary and secondary school teachers and 700 additional workers in the health care sector. (Informe Pastran, Dec.)
- The Ministry of Agriculture has authorized growers to expand the cultivation of Robusta coffee in areas below 400 meters (1,300 feet) above sea level. The Robusta coffee, which is of inferior quality to the Arabica grown predominantly in Nicaragua, is resistant to fungus pests like the coffee rust which damaged much of the country's coffee several years ago. The Robusta coffee will not be able to be planted within 30 kilometers of areas where Arabica is grown. The departments of Jinotega, Matagalpa, Nueva Segovia and Estelí will continue to produce Arabica coffee exclusively while Robusta may be grown in the Southern and Northern Caribbean Autonomous Regions (except for the municipality of Waslala), Chinandega, Leon, Granada, Masaya, Rivas, Rio San Juan, and Chontales. (Informe Pastran, Dec. 5)
- The San Jacinto-Tizate Geothermal Energy Plant in the Department of Leon generated 54.6 megawatts of electricity (with a value of over US\$14.3

million) in September, according to the Polaris Energy Company which runs the plant. Company officials said they were very pleased with these figures and announced that they are exploring two new geothermal wells. Polaris Energy currently produces 12% of the energy consumed in the country. A total of US\$43 million has been invested in geothermal energy in Nicaragua in 2016 according to the web publication Energia Limpia XXI. (Informe Pastran, Dec. 5)

- The Nicaraguan Ministry of Health (MINSA) now has 30 mobile clinics which began work in rural areas on Dec. 5, heading for villages in the municipalities of Prinzapolka, Waspam, Bilwi, Bluefields and the Mining Triangle (Bonanza, Rosita and Siuna). Each mobile clinic will attend to the needs of patients in the areas of internal medicine, gynecology, pediatrics, dentistry, and natural medicine. Health Minister Dr. Sonia Castro said that the hope is to have 100 functioning mobile clinics by the end of next year. (Informe Pastran, Dec. 5)

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