

[November 30, 2016]

Failed lawyer and baseball player Fidel Alejandro Castro Ruz ran Cuba for 50 years, or as The Nation cheerfully spun it, "almost outlasted 11 US presidents". Cuba was such a *paraíso*, thousands were imprisoned or tortured or died or fled (or died trying), and basic human rights and freedoms were quashed. And while the average comrade was lucky to make \$50 per/month, the cigar-chomping El Comandante racked up a \$900 million fortune!

The reaction to his death has been a far cry from the universal circle-jerk which greeted the passing of his amigo and fellow piece of shit, Nelson Mandela (see "Madiba Does His Little Dance in Hell"). To add "insult" to "injury", no big shot will be paying tribute to Papa in person, I assume, because Mandela killed innocent people to end apartheid while Castro killed innocent people - oops, "altered the course of individual lives, families, and of the Cuban nation"; thanks for catching that, Obama - to simply gain power. Still, his demise has left more than a few dumb-asses down in the dumps:

\* Bashar al-Assad: "The name Fidel Castro will live forever in the minds of generations and remain an inspiration for all the peoples who aspire to achieve real independence and liberation from the yoke of colonialism and hegemony".

\* Verónica Michelle Bachelet Jeria: "... a leader for dignity and social justice in Cuba and Latin America".

\* Russell Brand: "La historia me absolverá" ("History Will Absolve Me", the title of a speech Castro gave on October 16, 1953 while standing trial for his attack on the Moncada Barracks, which killed 15 soldiers and 3 police officers)

\* Jimmy Carter: "Rosalynn and I share our sympathies with the Castro family and the Cuban people... We remember fondly our visits with him in Cuba and his love of his country".

\* Salvador Sánchez Cerén: "[He] will always live in the hearts of the people that are fighting for justice, dignity, and fraternity".

\* Jeremy Corbyn: "He will be remembered both as an internationalist and a champion of social justice".

\* Rafael Correa: "One of the greats has left us".

\* Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva: "His spirit of combativeness and solidarity nourished dreams of liberty, sovereignty, and equality".

- \* Keith Ellison: "He was a revolutionary leader who confronted a system of government that excluded everybody except the military and the money-rich".
- \* Adolfo Pérez Esquivel: "He is a symbol of resistance to the empire, which always sought to destroy Cuba with blockade. The resistance of the Cuban people and Fidel Castro himself, as its undisputed leader, is incredible. It is an example of a perfect balance between the words and actions".
- \* Louis Farrakhan: "The revolution that Jesus was to bring about would take those that were up and sit them down and those that were down and deprived would be raised up. Such a man was Fidel Castro. No wonder people hated him".
- \* Lupe Fiasco: "A symbol of resistance against western imperialist oppression and labeled an oppressor himself".
- \* Pope Francis to Raúl Castro: "I express my sentiments of sorrow to Your Excellency and other family members of the deceased dignitary, as well as to the people of this beloved nation".
- \* George Galloway: "You were the greatest man I ever met Comandante Fidel. You were the man of the century".
- \* Hage Geingob: "Our comrade is no more but his revolutionary legacy will remain with Namibia forever".
- \* Ralph Gonsalves: "[He] was a warm and humorous person, generous in spirit, full of life, and a love for life and living. May Fidel's soul rest in peace, his ideas and example live on".
- \* Mikhail Gorbachev: "He will remain in our memory as an outstanding politician, an outstanding man, and our friend".
- \* Nayef Hawatmeh: "The departure of the comrade, the leader, the friend, the great revolutionary, the patriot, and the nationalist Fidel Castro is a great loss for all revolutionaries and nationalist forces around the world".
- \* Michael Higgins: "[He] will be remembered as a giant among global leaders whose view was not only one of freedom for his people but for all of the oppressed and excluded peoples on the planet".
- \* François Hollande: "He represented, for Cubans, pride in rejecting external domination".

- \* Jesse Jackson: "The oppressed the world over joined Castro's cause of fighting for freedom and liberation. He changed the world".
- \* Timoleón Jiménez: "Eternal glory to his memory! Viva Fidel!"
- \* Xi Jinping: "His glorious image and great achievements will be recorded in history forever".
- \* J  an-Claude Juncker: "... the world has lost a man who was a hero for many".
- \* Imran Khan: "Today the world lost an iconic revolutionary leader Fidel Castro, who liberated his nation from all vestiges of imperialism".
- \* Ken Livingstone: "He was not living as a billionaire laundering money off into a Panamanian bank account or anything like that. He was good for the people".
- \* Nicol  s Maduro: "Sixty years after the Granma sailed from Mexico, Fidel sails toward the immortality for all those who fight their whole lives. Onward to victory, always!"
- \* Aaron Mair: "He fought for his country! Still more honor than Trump!"
- \* Julius Sello Malema: "We love Fidel Castro and we are inspired by his fearless struggle against imperialism. We salute the 26 July movement. RIP Commandant Castro".
- \* Alexander Mercouris: "[His] death removes from the global scene a political genius who transformed Cuba whilst securing its independence from the US".
- \* Narendra Modi: "May his soul rest in peace. We stand in support with the Cuban Government and people in this tragic hour".
- \* Evo Morales: "[He] left us a legacy of having fought for the integration of the world's peoples. The departure of Comandante Castro really hurts".
- \* Tom Morello: "By defying Yankee imperialism for 50 years, instituting the best healthcare, child immunization, and literacy systems in the Western Hemisphere, and being an unrepentant advocate of the poor and exploited, it is no surprise that millions will mourn his passing".
- \* Taslima Nasreen: "[He] left Cuba with free healthcare, free schools, and not a single street in his name or a single statue in his honour".

- \* Enrique Peña Nieto: "Fidel Castro was a friend of Mexico, promoter of a bilateral relationship based on respect, dialogue, and solidarity."
- \* Vladimir Putin: "This strong and wise man always looked with confidence to the future. He embodies the highest ideals of politics, citizen, and patriot, sincerely convinced of the rightness of the cause which he gave his whole life".
- \* Dilma Rousseff: "[He] was one of the most important contemporary political and a visionary who believed in building a fraternal and just society, free from hunger and exploitation, a Latin America united and strong".
- \* Maithripala Sirisena: "The iconic leader of an era of revolution bids farewell to the world. Rest in peace, Comrade Fidel Castro".
- \* Jill Stein: "Fidel Castro was a symbol of the struggle for justice in the shadow of empire. Presente!"
- \* Peter Thomson: "A tireless advocate for equity in the international arena, Fidel Castro was an inspirational figure for developing countries in particular. His dedication to their advancement, especially in the fields of education and health, will be long remembered".
- \* Justin Trudeau: "Both Mr. Castro's supporters and detractors recognized his tremendous dedication and love for the Cuban people who had a deep and lasting affection for 'El Comandante'".
- \* Alexis Tsipras: "Farewell, Comandante. Until the peoples' eternal victory".
- \* Manuel Zelaya: "The greatest revolutionary in the world, against injustice they could never overcome. Until always, Commander!"
- \* Brian Wilson, Labour Party: "Fidel Castro, for his region and for oppressed people throughout the world, sent out a message of hope".

For those still wondering why Donald Trump won the presidency, there's your answer.

As the talking airheads debate his legacy, to me, his real legacy is a then-5 year old boy found off the coast of Miami. When he was released from a hospital to his great-uncle, it was the feel-good story of 1999. Then Fidel threw a hissy fit, and Bill Clinton and Janet Reno - with the help of boot-jacked thugs - gift-wrapped the boy back to *paraíso* in exchange for Papa's promise not to dump more of his human waste onto our shores (see "Losing Elián").

Now 22 years old, Elián González has been speaking to the Cuban media about the tyrant he calls "my father, my friend, my grandfather":

"Fidel's legacy is me and every young person who has grown under his teachings. He taught us to fly, he taught us to dream, and it's now up to us. Now that we don't have him our side anymore, it's up to us to lead the way, it's up to us to fulfill the revolution. Superman was a fake hero. We, the Cuban people, are proud to have a real hero. That hero had greater powers than Superman because he has the power of being invincible, of being immortal. Fidel lives in the hearts of all Cubans. Fidel grows and becomes history, and Fidel will never die".

Or as El Comandante told journalist Jean-Luc Mano: "You know, I'm going to Hell".