

[Speech given by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, president of the Republic of Cuba, at the official ceremony commemorating the 45th Anniversary of the assault on the Presidential Palace and the occupation of Radio Reloj. Karl Marx theater march 13, 2002 \[1\]](#)

Date:

13/03/2002

Compatriots:

Today, Jose Antonio, who died when he was 24 years old, would be here with you if he had survived other dangers and had not perished in combat that March 13th, 1957.

I can still hear that strange tic tac on Radio Reloj*; no words, just that. From a thousand-meters-high mountain in the heart of the Sierra Maestra, and with only twelve men, we were trying to figure out that mystery.

Something very serious was happening! But I was far from thinking that at that very moment a group of heroic compatriots, with Jose Antonio as their leader, were honoring the agreement to fight together to "overthrow the tyranny and to make the Cuban Revolution", which the July 26 Movement and the University Students Federation had signed in Mexico on August 30th, 1956.

Our group had stated that that year we would be fighting in our homeland, but we used an audacious and daring phrase: "In 1956 we shall be free or we shall be martyrs." That year was then only 90 days away. The enemy was on a countdown as it was convinced that we would not be able to honor that pledge, and would thus be discredited. From the tactical point of view that may have been, or not, a correct assertion, but we were led to make it by the prevailing skepticism and the lost faith of our people so many times deceived that they could believe no more.

That March 13th, when our modest expeditionary force had been taken by surprise, attacked, disbanded and almost annihilated in the days following the landing, Jose Antonio honored what he felt was a sacred duty derived from the Mexico Agreement and from his own principles.

Many heroic combatants from the Revolutionary Directory that he had found on February 24th, 1956 fought and died with him. The brave and gallant action was followed but an orgy of blood. At that moment, there was hardly anything left of the two forces that had signed the agreement.

When Radio Reloj could finally break its unusual silence, we all learned what had happened. It was painful then to remember that lively, noble, selfless young man of an extraordinary courage and deep revolutionary convictions. I could neither forget the fraternal affection that he had always showed me personally.

He was a particularly charismatic leader who on countless occasions marched with the students, always in the frontline, and crashed against the tyranny's repressive forces.

Often times I have hurt, very deeply, when young men like him, Abel, Frank Pais and many others lost

their lives along the way. What was the Revolution to them? What was it to Cespedes, Agramonte, Maceo, Marti and a large pleiad of patriots who perished in the struggles for independence? What was it to Mella, Guiteras, Martinez Villena and others like them who also fell along the way without the possibility to see any of their dreams come true?

On occasions such as this, one feels like saying: Glory forever to those who knew "only the pleasure of sacrifice" as Marti offered to Gomez! However, in this case, I would not add, as he did in completing his historical phrase, "and the likely ingratitude of men."

They left to us the example which has inspired our people --day after day, piece by piece, and idea upon idea-- to turn Cuba from a Spanish colony first and a humiliating imperialist domain later into the most independent and free nation on Earth; from a slavery society, full of injustices and inequalities, into the most fraternal and just country that the world has known.

It is not with slanders and lies that the great monument built by our people to the most noble and pure sentiments of the human person will be destroyed. And, it will not be possible to erase it from the history records because it has been built and defended in the face of the most powerful empire that has ever existed.

Not even the most sophisticated and destructive weapons with the capacity to completely obliterate the human specie have any possibility to weaken the determination and courage with which Cuba has defended, and will continue to defend to the last breath, the values it has cultivated and the rights it has conquered.

The most important of all the weapons that the conquerors of nations and the big empires always had, which is fear, the enemies of the Cuban Revolution have not had nor will they ever have to use against us.

On such sound basis, dear compatriots, I can assure you that what makes us all proud today is but a pale reflection of what we will attain in the future with the enormous human potential and the new values created by the Revolution.

But, well done is better than well said. We shall be realized as human beings and we shall behave as such. We shall be the most learned society on Earth. We shall enjoy the great happiness that comes with man's dignity, fraternity and creativity. We shall make our modest contribution to the future of Humanity. And we shall happily cease to exist if the empire ever tried to stop us and if we were forced to pay the modest price of our own lives.

It will no longer be possible to prevent that many other peoples around the world follow the humble footprints that our Revolution has been leaving in its walk through History.

One way or another, we shall overcome!

That, we swear!

*Radio Reloj: A Cuban national radio station broadcasting mostly news and announcing the time around the clock. (N. of the T.)

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Speech given at the ceremony commemorating the 45th Anniversary of the Assault on the P

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