
Raul Castro bids farewell to brother Fidel with a walk through history

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The President of Cuba on Tuesday paid tribute to his deceased brother Fidel with a speech recounting all the historical milestones that they lived through together in the iconic Revolution Square in the Cuban capital, from agrarian reform to the death of Ernesto "Che" Guevara and the dramatic "special period".

This is Raul Castro's first public speech since his televised announcement on Nov. 25 on the death of his 90-year-old brother, who stepped down from power 10 years ago owing to failing health.

Castro, who began his speech with sincere gratitude for the Cuban people, the Communist Party and Castro family, said that Fidel "devoted his entire life to solidarity, led a socialist revolution of the humble, by the humble and for the humble, who became a symbol of the anti-colonial, anti-apartheid, anti-imperialist struggle, for emancipation and dignity of people."

"His vibrant words resonate today in this square," said Castro before evoking some of the historic events that took place in this iconic location in Havana, key moments of the Cuban Revolution, the same place where thousands gathered to bid the fallen leader farewell.

In the same square the Cuban leader had ratified the Agrarian Reform Law, one of the first major economic measures undertaken after the triumph of the revolution.

There they also adopted the first and second Havana declarations in 1960 and 1962, which reaffirmed the island's sovereignty and its relationship with the Communist erstwhile Soviet Union and China.

He recalled how he was together with his brother in one of the buildings flanking the Revolution Square during the explosion of the French weapons freighter La Coubre in 1960 which left 101 dead in the harbor of Havana.

And the night in 1967 when the square hosted a solemn evening of tribute to Che after his assassination in Bolivia.

Castro also spoke about the toughest phase of the "special period", when Cuba plunged into a profound economic crisis after the fall of the Soviet Union, and the period of mourning after an aircraft of the Cuban Aviation airline was bombed in Barbados killing 73.

"In the same spirit the people have come these days with a large participation by the youth to pay tribute and swear allegiance to the ideas and work of the commander in chief of the Cuban revolution," said Castro.

"Precisely here where we commemorate our victories, we say together to our selfless, combative and heroic people: 'Until victory always!' (Hasta la victoria siempre!) the Cuban President said with a broken voice, amid multitudinous cries of "I am Fidel" and "Raul, friend, the people are with you."
