

[Speech given by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, President of the Republic of Cuba, at the ceremony in homage to the births of Maceo and Che in el Cacahual, Havana, on June 15, 2002 \[1\]](#)

**Date:**

15/06/2002

Fellow Cubans:

Today we are paying homage to two extraordinary men who have left a profound imprint on the history of our homeland: Maceo and Che.

I avidly read anything and everything about the former. I always saw him as a legend. His 26 wounds and the more than 800 combat actions in which he took part went far beyond the limits of fantasy of a teenager or a young man, seeming like a god of war to our eyes. To me he seemed to be unreachable, too high and too far away. Later, the modest experience of our own revolutionary war helped me see that amazing man more close at hand.

I saw the second of the two firing his first shot and realizing his first exploits. Doctor and intellectual turned fearless soldier, always the first to volunteer whenever we needed someone for difficult missions, I had the privilege of knowing him a little more close at hand. If I were to look for a word that was synonymous with austerity, integrity, a spirit of sacrifice and ethics, that word would be Che.

They were born 83 years apart. The first was already a legendary figure when the second entered the world. If one of them proclaimed that whoever tried to take possession of Cuba would have to gather up the dust of its soil soaked in blood, if he did not perish in the struggle, the other soaked Bolivian soil with his blood trying to prevent the empire from taking over America.

Both invaded from east to west; both perished in combat; both are today insuperable symbols of revolutionary courage and intransigence; both are with us now and we with them; both did what an entire people has sworn it is willing to do; both were born on the same day: yesterday, June 14. Fate could not have arranged it anything better.

Seventy-two hours ago millions of Cubans marched in a revolutionary mobilization that, because of its size, is unprecedented. It was like a gigantic Protest of Baraguá against those who a century ago stole her independence from Cuba and who today are trying to snatch the revolution and even our own homeland from our people. And today, June 15 at 10 in the morning, that people will begin to write a similar page in the history of our homeland and of the world, and they will bequeath to their descendants what will perhaps be the greatest honour of our epoch.

We already swore an oath, at that historic site of Baraguá, at the height of the battle for the return of the kidnapped little boy, that we would battle on until the complete cessation of the economic war, the genocidal blockade and the murderous laws to which the Cuban people has been subjected for decades on ends.

Today we are taking another oath, an oath that will be also taken by the overwhelming majority of Cubans: that we shall be unshakeably faithful to the homeland, the Revolution, and to socialism, that

imperialist domination and the capitalist system shall never return to Cuba — that would be like going back to the colonial system, or even the feudal system or the slave system which preceded it, and which were long ago abolished by history.

General Antonio Maceo, Cubans today, brought up on your immortal example, would like to have shared with you the honour of being with you that glorious day when you said to the representative of Spanish colonial power: We want no peace without independence.

Che, beloved brother: all your comrades in arms would have liked to have fought with you at Quebrada del Yuro and to have battled for the liberation of America. It was an unrealizable dream. Destiny had given our heroic people the mission to withstand 43 years of aggressions and to finally say NO to the imperial government which is threatening us and trying to impose a new Platt amendment on Cuba, one more obnoxious than that of 1901.

This is why the people whom you helped to overthrow the tyranny are today waging the most glorious battle in its history against the government of the hegemonic superpower, which wants to destroy us.

Fellow Cubans:

Revolutionary Cubans, in the thick of the Battle of Ideas we are waging and embroiled in the arduous and heroic defence of our Homeland, the Revolution and Socialism, on a day like today we are rendering a special tribute to our two great heroes, with a firm, unshakeable decision: We shall all be like Maceo and Che.

Long live socialism.

Patria o Muerte

Venceremos.

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