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Cuba marks Its National Day of Rebellion with the determination of Fidel

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The Moncada. Photos: Bill Hackwell

Havana, July 25 — Tomorrow, the eyes of Cuba are on Santiago. The leaders of the island, Santiago inhabitants, and Cubans from all over the country are in the city where it all began 70 years ago. For others in other parts of the island, we will be closely following the calendar of activities that will be held to honor our National Day of Rebellion. Such a history to think that it has been seven decades since Fidel and the other revolutionaries attacked, against all odds, the Moncada Barracks with weapons that he characterized as being more appropriate for bird hunting.

I was thinking how appropriate it was that July 26 this year will be celebrated in Santiago de Cuba as it is intertwined with every facet of Fidel's life, from his early schooling to the Moncada to his final resting place.



The Moncada today.

The little house in Santiago de Cuba from where Fidel saw the sea for the first time is still standing. He was six years old when his parents, Lina and Ángel, sent him to the Tivoli neighborhood, where the family of his teacher from Birán, his birthplace in Holguín, lived.

The wooden house at number 6 in the Loma del Intendente retains its austere character. In the small living room, where there was barely room for a piano, today the board walls are embellished with photos of the boy and phrases taken from the book *Cien horas con Fidel* by the journalist Ignacio Ramonet that recalls the conditions of our leader's childhood in this place, where he lived for approximately two years and eight months.



The Sierra Maestras.

In that memorable interview, he confessed to Ignacio Ramonet that it was “a damp, small house (...), without electricity (...) with walls made of boards and roofs of discolored tiles, facing a small dirt square, with no trees”. However, he was captivated by the balcony of this place “that leaked when it rained” and where “I lived through some very busy days” and which “had a beautiful view of the mountains of the Sierra Maestra, and also of a part of the Bay of Santiago, very close by.”

It is not hard to imagine him walking around La Loma, visiting the “little grocery store where they sold coconut nougat made with sugar, one penny each,” or

climbing the stairs of Padre Pico Street, which years later saw the young people of the July 26th Movement (M26J) pass by, whom we remember today 70 years after the Revolutionary actions of that July 26th, 1953.

The Secondary School, which later became a barracks for the Batista dictatorship - today the Clandestine Fight Museum-, formed part of the surroundings.

The school, located in front of the house, was used by soldiers during the dictatorship of Gerardo Machado, and Fidel never forgot the scene he saw from the doorway: "The soldiers were kicking a civilian who might have said something to them as he passed by. The atmosphere was tense."

Twenty-one years later, on November 30th, 1956, members of the M26J attacked the Institute - by then a barracks of the Batista dictatorship - led by Frank País.

Today, the house marked with the number 6 is the most discreet and yet endearing place in the Loma del Intendente.

This is where the leader of the Revolution's relationship with Santiago began. The windows are always open, and the breeze running between the sea and the Sierra Maestra crosses the little house from side to side. Four flamboyant trees escort the plot of land where Fidel played and where other children remember him now.



Fidel's Mausoleum and the Martyrs of July 26. Photo: Bill Hackwell

The local government zealously guards these places that bear witness to Fidel's life in a city still moved by the physical loss of the man who, as a child, saw the sea here for the first time.

In the early hours of Wednesday morning, the leaves of the red cloak, leaves that guard the Mausoleum where Fidel's remains lie in Santa Ifigenia Cemetery, Santiago de Cuba, are damp. Two white roses adorn the smooth granite stone from a site near the Gran Piedra, on which all eyes in the cemetery at the foot of the Sierra Maestra coincide.



Mariana Grajales

He is not alone. To his left, a sculpture by Mariana Grajales, the Mother of the Cuban Homeland, accompanies him next to the mausoleums of Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, the Father of the Homeland, and the Apostle José Martí. And to his right are the martyrs who fell in the actions of July 26, 1953. Frank and Josué País, young men killed by Batista henchmen on the streets of Santiago, lie a few meters away. They are also remembered on this National Day of Rebellion.

A life cycle that began in the little red-tiled house and ends in Santa Ifigenia, but the

trail of Fidel and the young people of the July 26 Movement is not a circle that closes in time. The leader of a revolution “greater than ourselves,” as he once warned, is the horizon of a city, of a country, of an era that started 70 years ago but one that is just beginning.

Source: [Resumen Latinoamericano - English](#)

