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April 16: Three glorious Cuban anniversaries on one date

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Corner of 23rd and 12th in the Vedado district of the capital. Photo: Bill Hackwell

Every April 16, Cuba celebrates three glorious anniversaries. First, the declaration of the socialist character of the Cuban Revolution. Second, the Day of the Militiaman. And the third, the founding of the Cuban Communist Party. These three events are nourished by a single root: patriotism, unity, and the people's willingness to defend the Revolution at any cost.

Sixty-three years ago, on April 16, 1961, the island bid farewell to seven Cubans who had lost their lives on the previous day, victims of the U.S. bombing of the airports of Santiago de Cuba, Ciudad Libertad and San Antonio de los Baños, a precursor to the Bay of Pigs invasion on April 17, 1961. In the busy avenues of 23rd and 12th, in the

capital's Vedado district, Commander in Chief Fidel Castro proclaimed that the newborn Revolution of 1959 would be patriotic, democratic and socialist, of the humble, by the humble, and for the humble.

With their fists and rifles raised, the militia people swore to defend the Revolution that Fidel described at whatever cost. In every corner of the country, the armed people were ready to defend the revolutionary work and the socialist ideology.

Those who witnessed that day remember April 16, 1961, as if it were yesterday. The combatants of the 148th battalion of the National Revolutionary Militias were part of that crowd gathered with rifles in hand at the corner of 23rd and 12th. The emotion multiplied after Fidel's words, which were immortalized in newspapers and radio stations of the time: "Fellow workers and farmers, this is the socialist and democratic Revolution of the humble, with the humble and for the humble".

After his words, the notes of The Internationale, the official anthem of the workers of the world and of the majority of the socialist and communist parties, were sung. Hours later, the militiamen present there fought alongside Fidel on the sands of the Bay of Pigs.

That disposition materialized in combat, when the militia, along with the Rebel Army and the National Revolutionary Police, fought the invaders, annihilating them in less than 72 hours. Every inch of land in the country became a trench. And in honor of that victory, April 16 was chosen as Militia Day, celebrated every year, as a tribute to the men and women who fought the mercenaries or were willing to do so throughout the country.

Many witnesses of that struggle are the same ones who in 1965 joined the ranks of the Communist Party of Cuba, which took April 16, 1961, as its founding date, given the symbolism of that occasion. The protagonists of that struggle will relive today the emotion of those April days, in a political tribute that will take place in the same

avenues of 23rd and 12th this afternoon.



Photo: Bill Hackwell

Today, Fidel's words will resound once again: "The people of yesterday, semi-literate, with a minimal political culture, were capable of making the Revolution, defending the Homeland, later attaining an extraordinary political consciousness, and initiating a revolutionary process that has no parallel in this hemisphere or the world. I say this not out of a ridiculous chauvinist spirit, or with the absurd pretension of believing ourselves to be better than others; I say it because the Revolution that was born on January 1st, 1959, by chance or destiny, was subjected to the hardest test to which any revolutionary process in the world has ever been subjected to."

Those words do not lose their validity, nor does the Revolution, which frightens the

reactionaries in the world so much, but which today stands as a lighthouse before the eyes of the world. This hardest test of ours continues but we are aware of the enormous responsibility we have to the peoples of the world, and we will always know how to be up to that responsibility.

Source: [Resumen Latinoamericano - US](#)

