

60th Anniversary of the Landing of the Granma



Mexico played a special role in the life of the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro. In Mexico, he put the finishing touches on the expedition to Cuba where he would wage the final battle for its true independence.

In Mexico, Fidel had many friends who in one way or another got involved in the support of the Cuban Revolution.

One of them, and perhaps the best known, is El Cuate, the nickname by which all knew Antonio del Conde, who, visibly moved in learning of the sad news of the passing away of the Cuban revolutionary leader said: "There are no words capable of expressing the meaning of his death. He taught me a new life and now has to teach me how to live without him".

El Cuate met Fidel in 1955, in Mexico, the country where the Cuban revolutionary leader had arrived after his release from prison on what was then known as the Isle of Pines, today the special municipality of the Isle of Youth, where he remained behind bars for two years.

Tirelessly faithful to his ideals, the young Cuban leader would continue his revolutionary endeavors in Mexico, from where, along with 82 other young revolutionaries sailed aboard the Granma yacht towards Cuban shores.

Sixty years ago this past November 25th, in the year 1956, Fidel, accompanied by today's Cuban President Raul Castro and the Heroic Guerrilla Ernesto "Che" Guevara, left aboard the Granma yacht in pursuit of a dream that came true the 1st of January 1959.

El Cuate was there, at the port of Tuxpan, when the Cubans sailed aboard the small white yacht.

After the departure, hard, difficult days would come, which tested the revolutionary will of the expeditionaries.

Those on board the small yacht had to face sea sickness, bad weather and the very real possibility of being detected by the strong naval force of the tyrant Fulgencio Batista.

On one occasion, the spirit of solidarity of Fidel was evident when he ordered the yacht to stop the engines to search for and rescue one of the expeditionaries that had accidentally fallen in the sea.

Bad weather and excess weight prevented the Granma from arriving at Santiago de Cuba by November 30th, in time to join the rebellion in that city organized by the revolutionaries to distract the troops and allow the safe disembarkment of the expeditionaries and the few weapons they had carried with them.

The Granma yacht would arrive near the Las Coloradas beach on December 2nd, 1969 -- 60 years ago today.

The difficult trip proved the iron clad will of the sea sick expeditionaries, headed by Fidel, to retake the struggle for national independence that had begun during the nineteenth century.

The tenacity, determination and the hopes to turn the independence dream into reality in those difficult days keyed the life of Fidel. He, along with his Granma comrades, did not retreat before the possibility of losing their lives and begin a struggle to build a country known for its social justice. With the Granma landing, the long struggle of other Cuban patriots who also fought to make Cuba a free nation, would finally end in victory.

A replica of the Granma yacht is on display at the Museum of the Revolution, and is visited daily by Cubans and foreigners from all parts of the world, interested in admiring that symbol of the greatness of a generation that did not stop at the possibility of offering their blood and lives in order to achieve the true independence of Cuba and fulfill the dreams of a whole nation.

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