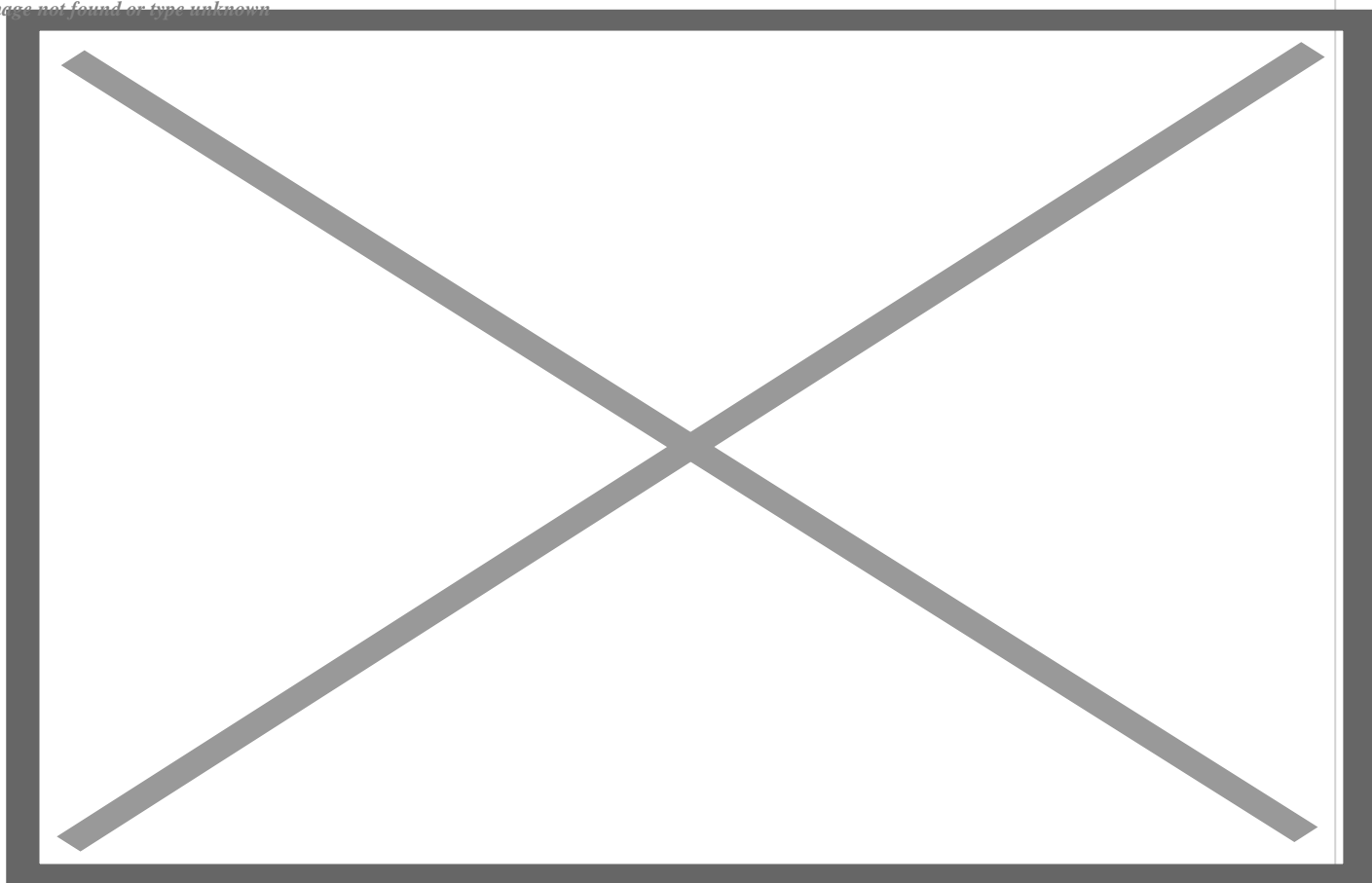


Plan Turquino: Improving life in the mountains

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Plan Turquino. Photos: Internet

By María Josefina Arce

Thirty-five years ago, at the initiative of the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, the Program of Attention to the Integral Development of the mountainous regions was launched for the social and economic advancement of those areas of difficult access, forgotten before January 1959.

Also known as the Turquino Plan, in allusion to the highest elevation of the country, came to broaden the perspective of the work that had already been carried out since the revolutionary triumph to improve the living conditions of the inhabitants of those places.

The Literacy Campaign had reached there in 1961. Knowledge reached those who had been isolated for decades, opening other horizons.

But progress continued to be made and schools were built to facilitate the learning of children and also the incorporation of adults into the educational programs made available by the government.

Even schools with small enrollment and one teacher have been opened in order to keep children in school and prevent them from traveling long distances.

Access to medical care revolutionized the lives of mountain people. Hospitals and other health centers made it possible to raise health indices.

Today, the transformations in these areas are evident. Schools with Internet access, medical offices throughout the highlands, improved housing and towers that guarantee radio, television and cell phone signals are some of the changes that have taken place.

A colossal effort has been made to bring electric power, given the characteristics of these areas. For this purpose, investments have been made in renewable energy sources such as photovoltaic panels and in the construction of small hydroelectric plants.

Culture has also reached these remote areas. Every year artistic crusades, which cover the different manifestations, delight the villagers. The movement has been growing with the time and already exponents of art from other nations participate in it.

The economic aspect also receives special attention. Priority is given to collaboration and local development programs, which generate employment, raise family income and take advantage of the productions.

Today, work continues to respond to existing difficulties that complicate life in the mountainous areas, which are of vital social and economic importance, as well as for the defense of the country.

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