

*Speech delivered by the President
of the Republic at the ceremony
for the 70th Anniversary of the
attack on the Moncada and
Carlos Manuel de Céspedes
Barracks*



Dear Army General Raul Castro Ruz, fighter of July 26, assailant of the Moncada Barracks, leader of the Cuban Revolution;

Dear Commander of the Revolution Ramiro Valdés Menéndez, assailant of the Moncada

Dear combatants of the heroic deeds of July 26th

Santiagueras and Santiagueros

People of Cuba

Compatriots:

Once again, Santiago brings us together again in one of the most endearing celebrations of the homeland.

We celebrated yesterday, July 25th, Santiago's Day, the 508th anniversary of the town that would be declared a city in 1523. Santiago was also the capital of Cuba and the starting point of the conquistadors towards continental lands.

Before being baptized Santiago, these lands were called Cuba and its original inhabitants were the first to call themselves Cubans. Historians confirm that this was the case until the early 19th century.

From them, we also know that the Patron Saint of this city, in spite of his Spanish origin, was dressed as a mambi with a yarey hat during the wars of independence, as testified by the piece preserved in the Emilio Bacardi museum of this city, the oldest in Cuba.

And the Mambisa Virgin, the pilgrim Charity of El Cobre, venerated by the patriots of this region, has her altar in the same church where the bravest of Cubans was baptized: Antonio Maceo y Grajales, the Bronze Titan.

"It is Santiago de Cuba," the great poet Manuel Navarro Luna would say. And those verses enclose as many legends as realities of the unique world of Santiago.

Today is July 26th and history calls on us to talk about a closer time: that of the young men, most of them boys, who without their own knowledge, as I said a few days ago, came to change the national history in the early morning of that carnival day in Santiago de Cuba. Something that, according to Dr. Olga Portuondo, historian of the City, connects with the rebellion of the independence period, when the most famous popular festivals in Cuba served to mask actions and messages of the rebels against the Spanish metropolis in their necessary link with their collaborators in the city.

Taking advantage of the hustle and bustle of the carnival of 1953, the assault on the Guillermon Moncada barracks, the second military fortress of the Batista dictatorship took place, an action with which the Centennial Generation would ignite the small engine that started the big engine of the Revolution until today, as expressed by Fidel.

Army General Raul Castro Ruz, one of the young assailants, only 22 years old, later described the action with the most beautiful words on the Eighth Anniversary: If Karl Marx said of the Paris communards that they tried to take the sky by storm, of the attack on the Moncada by several dozen young men armed with shotguns to kill birds, someone should say that they tried to take the sky by surprise (Applause).

Here we are, 70 years later, on another Santa Ana morning, another dawn enlivened by congas. Without shots breaking the dawn, we enter the gardens of the Ciudad Escolar 26 de Julio, which is now a school and museum, an integrated fortress of education and culture.

And it is a real privilege to walk through the facts and information with some of its protagonists. The date, the early morning and the historic company remind us of what the young people in their early twenties experienced seven decades ago, when they took over the Barracks, the Audiencia and the Civil Hospital.

Fidel and Abel guiding the actions, secret until the decisive hour. Fidel, the visionary, telling his comrades: "You can win in a few hours or be defeated ... in any case, listen well! ... the Movement will triumph. If we win tomorrow, what Martí aspired to will be done sooner. If the opposite happens, the gesture will serve as an example to the people of Cuba."

"We are already in combat." Raul Gomez Garcia's verses stand out in the collective memory before leaving La Granjita. Some of the assailants who do not arrive because they get lost in the unknown city; Ramiro who enters through Posta 3 with those of the first car, hits three soldiers and, when leaving, a bullet in one foot will follow him to the Sierra Maestra; the Cossack guard who breaks the surprise factor and makes the assault fail; Raul who takes command of the actions in the Audiencia, when they seemed lost; Fidel who orders a retreat.

Then comes the revenge, the bloodbath, the crime, the abuse in the hospital. The eyes of Abel, the serene resistance of the women and the accusatory photo of Tassende wounded in the leg and later murdered. Fidel captured by an honorable military and thus saved from the massacre of Chaviano. Fidel under the image of Martí, intellectual author of the assault. Those who, trying to attack the Revolution today, accuse the Government of dictatorship, should look for information about the events after the assault of this barracks and the Bayamo barracks. Within these walls only six comrades fell in combat; 55 were brutally tortured and murdered. The assailants of the Bayamo barracks suffered a similar fate. Fidel denounced it before the tribunal that tried him: "They were not killed for a minute, an hour or a whole day, but in a whole week, the blows, the tortures, thrown from the roof and the shootings did not cease for an instant as instruments of extermination handled by perfect craftsmen of crime. The Moncada barracks became a workshop of torture and death, and some unworthy men turned the military uniform into butchers' aprons".

The actions of July 26, 1953 were the beginning of the end of the last dictatorship installed in Cuba, with the recognition and immoral and material support of the United States. That is why they do not forgive the Revolution. For that reason, and because they believed that with the physical disappearance of the Historic Generation they could break national independence, international solidarity, the defense of the socialist alternative to savage capitalism.

The Moncada is the restart of the revolution so many times frustrated since 1868 by a lack of unity or foreign interference. The young people who here in Santiago or there in Bayamo threw themselves into combat without fear, neither of bullets, nor of repression, nor of death, gave their lives, in the first place, for the Martí's ideal of conquering all justice.

To maintain what has been conquered and to advance further is the duty of the generations responsible today for the immediate destiny of the nation that our fathers won for us on their feet. As long as the United States maintains its brutal and genocidal blockade against Cuba and tries to trample on our national dignity, we will have a Moncada to storm! (Applause.) As long as we do not reach a level of dignified prosperity for all Cubans, we will have a Moncada to storm! (Applause.) Every day, every hour, every minute: we have a Moncada to storm!

This Revolution is a constant struggle against hatred: it is the most passionate defense of freedom, love and happiness. That was also the assault on the Moncada! (Applause.) We will always stand up to confront hatred, violence, the perversity of those who do not want freedom and peace for Cuba. But since 1959 we are many more than a few dozen brave young people against Batista's tyranny. Since 1959, we are a people who defend the Revolution and socialism as the fairest way to achieve the fairest society for all (Applause). Cuba has had to confront the imperial ambitions of its powerful neighbor for more than 200 years. With various forms and methods, by seduction or by aggression, with stick or with carrot, its obsession to possess us has not ceased.

It is a behavior dictated by the very nature of imperialism, a natural enemy of the right to self-determination of peoples and of any government that really intends to develop programs of social justice;

a fierce and implacable adversary of countries, especially in our region, that exercise their foreign policy independently. It is a behavior of intolerant and very anti-democratic rejection of socialism and all the values that are pillars of national identity and on which rests and will rest the process of independence and national sovereignty restarted on July 26, 1953.

They have shown themselves to be more aggressive and more intolerant when they realize that there is no force in the world capable of making us renounce those Marxist ideals, but also those of Martí and Fidel Castro, which inspire the untiring struggle for the greatest possible social justice. That explains the severity of the economic blockade and the current validity of the reinforcement measures established by the Donald Trump administration and maintained by the Biden administration, whose effect has elevated the policy of economic coercion that has made the blockade escalate to a qualitatively more aggressive and harmful dimension.

To illustrate the severity of that policy, which the spokesmen of the empire and other willing "servants of the past in a new cup" try to deny loudly, I will only mention five of the most perverse measures, the most harmful to the economy and to our people:

I begin, although it is one of the most recent, with the unjustified inclusion of Cuba on the arbitrary list of the United States Government of States that allegedly sponsor terrorism. Beyond the slanderous meaning of that designation, it is known to have a very significant extraterritorial impact that harms Cuba's commercial and financial transactions in almost any part of the world. Naming Cuba on that list does not respond to any genuine concern about the scourge of terrorism. It is an opportunistic act aimed at deeply damaging the Cuban economy.

A second is the application of the provision of Title Three of the Helms-Burton Act, which allows actions to be taken in U.S. courts against businessmen from any country that legitimately establish trade and investment relations in Cuba. It is an action aimed at preventing foreign investment and damaging our foreign trade by threatening companies from any part of the world.

A third is the persecution of fuel supplies that the country has the need and every right to import. This is an aggressive action in violation of International Law, which remains in force against Cuba with a significant impact on our energy requirements for transportation, agriculture, water supply, industry and the fundamental services on which the daily life of the population depends.

The fourth measure, which illustrates the wickedness of this policy, is the intense persecution and demonization of the medical services provided by Cuban professionals in dozens of countries for the benefit of hundreds of thousands of people, mainly low-income and in less favored areas. This is an attack on an activity that is widely recognized internationally for the humanitarian benefit it offers and for contributing to the human right of access to health. This measure seeks to slander the Revolution and deprive the country of important economic income to sustain the national public health system itself.

A fifth and final example of these measures is the existence of an arbitrary list of Cuban entities with which Americans are prohibited from dealing with. It is a measure directed fundamentally against the tourist sector and seeks to limit income to the economy in this way.

These are only illustrative examples. They are all arbitrary and punitive decisions. That is why they provoke, together with the blockade as a whole, universal rejection, reiterated in multiple international forums. The reason is on Cuba's side. The blockade and hostility isolate the United States; but its effects can be lethal for an economy with limited resources. When one observes the expressions of support and solidarity that the Cuban nation receives from any corner of the planet, one feels reasons to consider that we are fortunate, that our work, our trajectory and our commitment are references for those who face and fight against injustice in many parts of the world, in spite of the current difficulties, in spite of the overwhelming effort to suffocate us, in spite of the powerful machinery of communication that in the service of imperialism is dedicated to discredit us, in the useless effort to demoralize us and break the

authority that Cuba has earned as a political and moral power. That is the example of Cuba!

It will always honor us a thousand times more to have by our side those friends who have risked and are risking everything for the fate of Cuba. I am speaking of the peoples in struggle, whose representatives accompany us this July 26 without asking for comforts and almost always supporting us in volunteer work under the intense summer heat, this year more scorching than ever.

From this tribune, an embrace and the grateful applause of Cuba for the unfailing sisters and brothers: Gail Walker and the Pastors for Peace Caravan representing the noblest of the American people (Applause); the Juan Rius Rivera Brigade, of the brave Puerto Ricans threatened and harassed by the colonial government (Applause); the 28th Latin American and Caribbean Brigade of Solidarity with Cuba (Applause and Exclamations of: "Long live socialist Cuba!" (Applause); the Caravan group from Brazil (Applause), the youth brigades from Belgium and Germany, among many others. Thank you, sisters and brothers! Cuba's resistance, I will say it again and again, is also a merit of you who give us encouragement (Applause).

Santiagueros and Santiagueros:

This celebration of the 70th Anniversary of Moncada has been earned by you for your history, but also, and very especially, for the work and the results in a period of serious limitations for the whole country. It was not only Santiago because it is the heart of this history, and 70 years is a very significant date; it is Santiago, as the Political Bureau reported at the time of approving the celebrations, for being also at the forefront of the most outstanding provinces in Cuba, a recognition shared by Cienfuegos and Sancti Spiritus, for their stability and progress in the main tasks, and also the recognition to Ciego de Avila and Matanzas. Our congratulations to the people of these Cuban provinces! (Applause.)

The good performance of these territories does not mean in any way that there are no problems in them. But they are distinguished by the way they face them with the aim of overcoming them and advancing. As for Santiago de Cuba, we know, as the General of the Army who knows and loves them best has said so many times, that Santiago is still Santiago! (Applause) That dissatisfaction is part of the spirit of rebellion that distinguishes them and that there are still many Moncadas to be assaulted to solve all the problems that beset us!

But coming back here again and again in the last years and months we always find progress and a province that has jumped over the hard shortages of the country, surpassing others in fundamental sectors such as Agriculture, Education and Health. A province that has maintained its beauty and hygiene and that has worked in the transformation of its neighborhoods with social debts and with the same passion that its baseball players play in the Guillermon Moncada, or dance tightly behind the drums, the cowbell and the Chinese cornet when the Cocuyé is played from La Trocha to Enramadas, or in the Fiesta del Caribe, also called the Fiesta del Fuego (Applause). You have done well, santiagueros, and you can surely do better!

As we discussed in the National Assembly, the people are waiting for answers on issues that today affect the standard of living and the daily life of all of us that we can solve without waiting for the blockade to be lifted. The battle against illegalities, crime and, above all, for the increase in the supply of goods for use and consumption to fight inflation are a difficult Moncada that we have the duty to take on here and throughout the country. Cuba deserves it, and those who one day came to this barracks to change history and changed it for the good of all, are waiting for us to do so! (Applause.)

With this sentiment, I would like to share with you something that Haydeé Santamaría expressed one day: "There is that moment in which everything can be beautiful and heroic (...).) And at that moment one can risk everything to preserve what really matters, which is the passion that brought us to Moncada. And that has its names, that has its look, that has its welcoming and strong hands. That has its truth in words and that can be called Abel, Renato, Boris, Mario or have any other name. But always at that moment

and in those that will follow it can be called Cuba. And there is that other moment in which neither torture, nor humiliation, nor threat can defeat that passion that brought us to Moncada." (Applause).

Good Cubans, patriots, compatriots, santiagueras and santiagueros:

Let us ratify here, before those assailants of the Moncada barracks 70 years ago who still accompany us, and on the earth that keeps the blood or the ashes of those who are no longer here, to preserve and protect the memory of those who gave their lives so that we could be definitively free, in that act of surrender that still moves us.

Since July 26, 1953, the best of each generation has lived facing the challenges and difficulties imposed by the times, with the spirit that was revealed in the Moncada, the idea of Fidel that will never abandon us: The setback can be turned into victory! (Applause.)

To conclude, with Fidel we repeat his words to Santiago when he gave the title of Hero to the City:

"May your heroism, your patriotism and your revolutionary spirit always be an example for all Cubans! May what we learned here always be the heroic slogan of our people: Homeland or Death! "May what we learned here on that glorious January 1st always await us: Victory! "Thank you, Santiago!"

Long live the Cuban Revolution!" (Applause and exclamations of: "Long live!"). Homeland or Death!

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