

Residents of Santiago de Cuba Await Caravan with Fidel's Ashes



Santiago de Cuba, December 3 (RHC-CCTV) -- The ashes of Cuban leader Fidel Castro continued to make their way across Cuba this Saturday, approaching Santiago de Cuba, in an 800-kilometer funeral caravan bound to end in this city, birthplace of Cuba's Revolution.

Santiago is the island's second largest city and the center of many key moments in Fidel Castro's revolutionary and personal life. Santa Ifigenia Cemetery here will be his final resting place.

Santiago is flanked by the Sierra Maestra Mountains, where Fidel fought his revolution, ending with the overthrow of U.S. backed dictator Fulgencio Batista.

When Batista finally fled the country, on New Year's Day 1959, a triumphant Fidel Castro came down from the mountains and gave his first victory speech from a balcony above what was then Santiago's city hall.

From there, he took his rebel army on a victory caravan, slowly making its way through every town on the 900 kilometer journey to the capital Havana. Fidel Castro's ashes have taken the exact reverse journey, as his funeral caravan is slowly approaching Santiago this Saturday morning.

On July 26th, 1953, Fidel and his comrades attacked Moncada Barracks here, starting the final phase of Cuba's revolutionary struggle. Moncada barracks is today a sprawling school complex.

Fidel Castro will be laid to rest Sunday morning at Santa Ifigenia Cemetery, the most historic in Cuba. It houses the mausoleum of National Hero Jose Marti, Cuba's most revered leader of the independence wars against Spain. The 1959 Cuban Revolution was inspired by Jose Marti's ideas of independence.

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