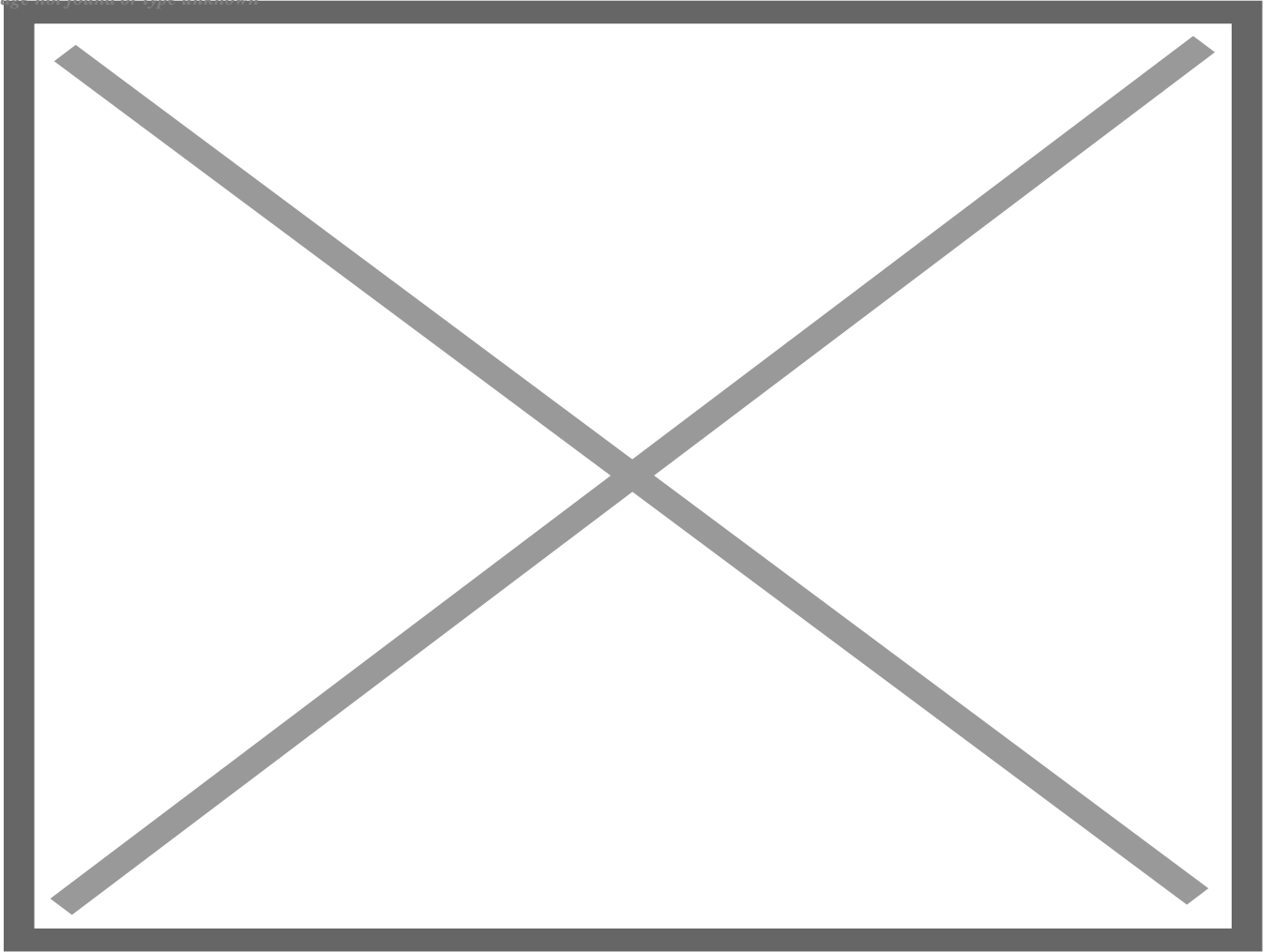


To serve the country

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Havana, June 3 (RHC) -- Power for Raúl has never been an end, but rather a way of serving the Homeland. On repeated occasions in his revolutionary life, he has left legacies without expecting anything in return from his contemporaries or future generations.

In the short time that elapsed from his return from Europe to the assault on Moncada, Raúl dedicated himself to preparing armed action against Batista. Fidel did not inform him about the details because the plan was totally compartmentalized. Only a few hours before the operation, at Granjita Siboney, he learned that he would go with five other men to take the Palace of Justice building, which was next to the barracks, to support the offensive of the main group with fire from the roof. , directed by Fidel.

Another group, made up of 20 men and led by Abel Santamaría, second leader of the movement, was to take the hospital that adjoined the rear of the fortress and neutralize any activity of the garrison in this sector.

Raúl and his companions carried out the first part of the order with relative ease. First they captured a corporal who was passing through the place, then the watchman of the Palace of Justice who came to open the door for them, who informed them where the guards guarding the building were. They took the latter prisoners and, after disarming them, locked them together with the other two in a room.

With other combatants, Raúl went up to the roof, from where he could see the Moncada very well. The combat had already begun, starting around 5:15 in the morning. The alarm siren sounded in the barracks. The bursts of a machine gun could be heard, which unfortunately was located out of reach of the weapons of those who were on the roof of the Palace.

The group opened fire on the barracks with the aim of immobilizing the garrison's actions. Raúl was shooting with a Springfield rifle, which he had used moments before at one of the soldiers, the operation of which he had learned with the rural guards in Birán. As is known, the fight only lasted about 15 minutes. As the surprise factor failed, it was impossible, with only about 60 poorly armed men, to take the fortress where a complete regiment of the regular army was defending. Fidel gave the order to retreat, which was observed by Raúl and his companions from the roof.

Raúl also ordered the retreat, but remained a few more minutes watching what was happening in the barracks. As he descended the building's elevator, he noticed that a military patrol was about to arrest his colleagues. He immediately pounced on the sergeant who was leading them, snatched his pistol and ordered the soldiers and his boss to get on the ground, which they did without resistance.

It was a moment when the fate of a man and that of his companions was decided; moments that, as the homonymous song from the Soviet television series *Seventeen Moments of Spring* says, "whistle next to the temple and bring dishonor to some and immortality to others." Raúl, in the absence of command from his group leader, gave the appropriate orders from the beginning and organized the withdrawal at the appropriate time. Thus, from a rank and file combatant, he became the leader.

In a few seconds, the assailants went from being arrested to being escorted. The unfortunate sergeant and the soldiers who accompanied him were taken to the same room occupied by the other detainees. They were ordered to sit quietly until they received further instructions.

Raúl ordered his companions to take the car in which they had arrived, start it and wait for him while he looked for the group leader. After confirming that he was not at the scene, they left at full speed. After going around several times they arrived at Ciudadamar, a coastal district of Santiago de Cuba, where they saw clothes hanging in the patio of a house and were forced to occupy them to get rid of the army uniform in which all the assailants who participated in the attacks were dressed. actions of July 26.

They returned to the center of the city and, upon arriving at Céspedes Park, one of them proposed going to the house of Micaela Cominches, whom he knew, where he was sure they would find protection. Raúl, like there were many, decided to seek help from people who were friends of his parents.

Of his group, none of them died in combat or fell into the clutches of the Batistas in those four horrible first days of repression, when those suspected of having participated in the assaults were subjected to the most brutal torture and murder.

Only two months before, between December 17 and 22, 1975, the First Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba had met in Havana, which adopted the Programmatic Platform of the organization, elected the leadership bodies of the Party, until then formed under the principle of cooptation, and approved other important documents.

The momentous meeting took place at the Carlos Marx theater. (...). The honor of inaugurating the works was granted to Raúl Castro. Cubans, as a general rule, tend to dedicate major political activities to important anniversaries in their history. On that occasion, Raúl stated that the congress was being held in the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the first Communist Party of Cuba.

(...) In the work of the congress, the election of the new leadership of the Party occupied a special place. Raúl was elected Second Secretary of the organization, a position he had held since the creation of the ORI. When referring to this issue in the closing words of the event, Fidel Castro said: It is known that in our Party and in our Revolution familialism cannot exist, nor will it ever exist; That is known! Sometimes two paintings come together: the case of Raúl and Vilma, and they are family. And so on other cases of other colleagues. But in our Party, where merit must always prevail, neither friendship nor family are, nor will they ever be, factors to consider. (...)

In the case of comrade Raúl, it is actually a privilege for me that, in addition to being an extraordinary revolutionary cadre, he is a brother. He earned those merits in the fight and from the earliest times. The family relationship served to enroll him in the revolutionary process, inviting him to Moncada. Ah!, but when there, in the Court of Santiago de Cuba, a patrol arrives and takes them prisoners, if Raúl does not do what he did at that moment, Raúl would not exist a long time ago, which was to take the gun from the chief of police. the patrol and take prisoner the patrol that had taken them prisoner. If he does not do that, all of them would have been murdered a few hours later in Moncada. And that was the beginning. And the prison, and the exile, and the Granma expedition, and the difficult moments, and the Second Front, and the work carried out during these years.

I say it and I emphasize it, because it is necessary to express to what extent in our Revolution the criterion that is imposed and will always be imposed is merit, and never any consideration of the type of friendship or family. We Cubans understand all this well, but it is also necessary for it to be understood outside our country.

Fidel's words were interrupted more than once by the loud applause of the delegates, who knew very well Raúl's merits.

Raúl Castro belongs to the lineage of statesmen who have never aspired to become the leading figure of the State or the Party. He welcomed Fidel Castro's leadership with complete naturalness and infinite faith in him, and has always insisted on highlighting his exceptional role in the Cuban Revolution. Together they have formed an inseparable couple, which multiplied the strength of each one by ten separately. Some historians have even compared them to Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. (...)

When Fidel fell ill, Raúl was turning 75 years old. Of course, he was already a very experienced leader, who knew the Party and State cadres perfectly. (...)

Power for him has never been an end, but rather a way to serve the country. On repeated occasions in his revolutionary life, he has left legacies without expecting anything in return from his contemporaries or future generations.

Fragments of the book "RAUL CASTRO: A MAN IN REVOLUTION. Source: (Granma)

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