

Cuba Prepares to Mark Revolt's 11th Anniversary

By Norman Gail

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SANTIAGO, Cuba, July 18 — It was almost exactly 11 years ago that Fidel Castro launched his attack on Moncada Barracks here to touch off the Cuban revolution.

But today, 5½ years after Castro finally acceded to power, the Cuban people are still reeling from profound social change, economic hardship and continuing notoriety as participants in one of the world's biggest political shows.

The stylish billboard signs along the highways read: "Everyone to Santiago with Fidel."

The papers, when they are not screaming about Sen. Barry Goldwater and American "aggression," in Vietnam, are featuring biographies of revolutionary martyrs, and rallying cries to meet special voluntary work quotas pledged in state farms and factories in celebration of the 11th anniversary of the 26th of July.

Ready for Celebration

Santiago, with its steep hills, narrow streets and thick-walled houses painted in quiet pastel shades, is being billed as "rebel yesterday, hospitable today and heroic always" in advertisements and posters throughout the coun-



The American economic blockade of Cuba has caused acute food shortages on Fidel Castro's island and here is

some evidence as residents of Havana line up for their weekly rations of fish.

IPS Photo by Marc Riboud, © 1964, Magnum Photos

try.

Meanwhile Santiago's 600,000 residents are bracing themselves for the onslaught of 550,000 visitors expected to arrive next week for the big production.

For a month now carpenters have been working around the clock building booths, street restaurants, displays and festival floats for the three-week Santiago carnival already under way.

Santiagoeros have been forming massive conga lines which, with pick-up combos of drums and trumpets, wend their way two or three nights a week through the dimly lighted streets.

Seven competing juke boxes on the same street blast out different tunes until 3 each morning while weary neighbors wait outside their houses for a chance to go to bed.

Preparing for Thousands

Jose Llanusa, Cuba's gruff, burly boss of tourism and sports, has installed himself in Santiago's Communist Party (PURS) headquarters to direct the preparations. "We expect 350,000 of the 550,000 visitors to come from right here in Oriente Province," he said while showing some visitors the preparations. "We will put them up in private homes, garages, parks, schools, barracks and in tents set up just outside the city. We're going to have a big gymnastic display and theater and ballet and symphony concert, and some students of the Young Communists Union staging a mock attack on Moncada Barracks.

The famous barracks near the center of town, which Fidel Castro and some 80 other rebels assaulted unsuccessfully in 1953 to get weapons for a guerrilla campaign in the Sierra Maestra have been converted into a "school city," as have many other military installations of the Batista dictatorship. This is one of the symbolic gestures of the Castro regime which has had a powerful political effect on the Cuban people.

Castro finally managed to start his guerrilla campaign against Batista in late 1956.

Shock and Excitement

The nearly eight years since have been crammed with more shock and excitement for Cubans than most other people's have experienced except when directly at war.

Those years saw a guerrilla

campaign and urban resistance movement met with indiscriminate torture and killing by the Batista dictatorship; trial and execution of more than 500 Batista "war criminals" when Castro took power in 1959; the nationalization of foreign and private Cuban investments, and the convulsive 1960 break with the United States.

The great majority of the

once flourishing Cuban middle class, which bore the major burden in the fight against Batista, now finds itself either exiled or made politically and economically powerless.

Era of Problems

In the past few years Cubans have gone through two waves of agricultural collectivization, the 1961 Bay of Pigs

invasion, the October 1962 missile crisis, and a craving for American spare parts and American goods as traditional production and distribution was destroyed and replaced by meager food rations and unskilled and disorganized farm and factory management.

Many Cubans over the past six weeks have told me that I am the first American they

have seen in four years. Instead they are seeing Bulgarian agronomists and Russian planners and Czech irrigation experts.

Last month the Chinese Communist national basketball team visited Cuba for a series of heavily attended matches, and this month it is some stars of the Russian ballet.