

Fidel Defies Guards To Meet People

Rousing Welcomes Given Cuba's Premier

By Bill Bantey

Fidel Castro, defying his own Cuban bodyguards and three other police forces, hugged and shook hands with thousands of people here yesterday and declared: "I feel as if I'm in Havana." He asked Mayor Fournier to call off his Montreal police guards and with them still trailing, he strode across the width of Dorchester St., straddling the central mall, to "meet my people." Still wearing his olive-green army fatigues, and a bronze scapular dangling from his neck, the bearded prime minister of Cuba received rousing welcomes wherever he went. "He could have been killed three dozen times the way he ignored us," a high police official said. As soon as his car, flying the Cuban flag, stopped anywhere, the 32-year-old rebel leader disappeared among the throngs to acknowledge cries of "Viva, Castro" and "Hurray, Fidel."

Women and teen-agers by the score fought to be close to him. Castro loved every moment of it. "There's a Latin atmosphere here," he said, "that I sort of missed in the United States." In the first few hours of his visit, he held court numerous times - at Montreal Airport, on the street, in the lobby of the Queen Elizabeth Hotel, in Ste Justine Hospital, and everywhere anyone stopped him. Explains Policy At a press conference, he explained the policies of his July the 26th movement and denied recurring charges that his government is Communist-influenced. "Our policy is humanism, not Communism," he asserted. "Anyone who says we are Communists knows nothing about political "culture." He admitted that he was delaying the calling of elections in Cuba, but said this was to permit the formation of "real" political parties. "Right now," he said, "94 per cent of the people are with us. The longer we delay in calling an election, the less support we will have. But an election today would be a Hitler or a Mussolini plebiscite because we are the only party." With Castro as he flew here from Boston - three hours behind schedule - was a party of some 75 Cuban government officials and newspapermen. Among those greeting the lawyer who toppled the dictatorship of Fugencio Batista was Andrew R. L. (Andy) McNaughton, a Montrealer who helped secure arms for the rebels during the uprising. th Many of Castro's July the 26 soldiers were with him. Like Castro, they wore army dress and beards. Castro continually held a cigar in his hand - even when he was admitted to the nursery in Ste. Justine Hospital. He left a trail of howling children in his wake. Two, however, were specially thrilled because the man with the beard stopped to talk and hold them in his arms. At the Queen Elizabeth, when he was ushered into his suite by Vice-President and General Manager Donald M. Mumford, he grabbed a handful of cookies and grapes, stuffed them into his mouth. He washed them down with a bottle of ginger ale before taking another puff on his Cuban cigar. On the street in front of the hotel, as he was mobbed by thousands of people, he stopped to give an interview to this reporter and another newsman. Police were frantic. Castro joked about his beard and dress. He said he couldn't afford either the cost or the time required for shaving. "Figure it out for yourself," he said. His dress, he added, was a symbol and he had no intention of shedding it. At a press conference later, Castro paid tribute to the Ste. Justine Hospital and said he wants to pattern new Cuban hospitals after it. The RCMP, he said, would also serve as a model for a new Cuban police force. The Mounties, they're wonderful," he said. "I never saw them before except in pictures. Now when I see them, I'm specially pleased. Their uniforms are the color of our July the 26th movement." Police were spotted on rooftops at the airport and at various vantage points along Castro's parade route. Their assignment: to watch out for hired killers purportedly assigned to wiping out the rebel chief.

Guest of Honor At Dinner

Later in the evening, Castro was guest of honor at a dinner given by Gaston Laurion, honorary president of the Chambre de Commerce des Jeunes, the organization sponsoring the prime minister's visit here. Castro spoke for 15 minutes before some 40 Montreal businessmen. He told how his regime is

Fidel Defies Guards To Meet People

Published on FIDEL Soldier of Ideas (<http://www.fidelcastro.cu>)

proceeding in an effort to better the situation of Cubans. "Our plans are ambitious plans," he declared, "but we are going to fulfill them. The people now know the meaning of selfdiscipline. Laurion presented hiim with a tractor at the close of the dinner. At 12:10 p.m., Castro left the hotel again, to attend the Chambre's Toy Dance campaign on behalf of 'Cuban children. A crowd of close to 200 people awaited him in the lobby. At the dance at the Craig St. Armory, there were another 4,000 people. Castro was due to leave here at 9:15 a.m. He is to pay a short visit to Houston, Texas, and then proceed to Buenos Aires where he'll attend a LatinAmerican economic conference.

Transcribed for research purposes by Kathleen Moore on 27 March 2009 4h10 a.m. and on 19 April 2009 at 4h13 a.m. from a photocopy of the article provided by Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa in a brown envelope postmarked 2008-03-31.

Author:

- [Bantey, Bill](#)

Source:

The Gazette
27/04/1959

Source URL: <http://www.fidelcastro.cu/en/articles/fidel-defies-guards-meet-people?width=600&height=600>