

[The First Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba](#)



It has been 44 years, but it seems like yesterday. The refurbished Karl Marx Theater seemed to shine amidst the smiles of hundreds of men and women, awaiting the opening of the First Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba. As all the delegates and guests sat down, the wait was tense with anticipation, until everyone sprung to their feet in a rousing ovation, as the historic leaders of the Revolution entered, Fidel Castro in front, leading personalities from several countries.

Thus began, on the morning of December 17, 1975, the highest body of Cuban communism, 16 years after the Rebel Army defeated the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista and ten years since the constitution of the Party's first Central Committee, taking a transcendental step in the institutionalization of the Revolution, with the Party as its driving force, as stipulated in the Constitution approved in a national referendum in 1976.

Many emotions would move the 5,000 delegates and guests over the following days until the Congress ended on December 22, in a giant gathering in the Plaza de la Revolución, although perhaps one of the most intense was when Fidel announced the news of the death in combat of Comandante Raúl Díaz Argüelles in Angola. He had fallen a few days earlier, on December 11, defending the sister African country invaded by South African troops and supporting the Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and its people.

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The extensive central report was read by Fidel, and held the attention of delegates every single minute. It began with an historical analysis of the Revolution as a continuation of Cuba's first struggles for independence, and continued with a review of economic development achieved in different sectors. The Congress included an analysis of errors committed over previous years, the projection of an economic direction system based on five-year plans, and ample discussion on social development, education, culture, sports, health, scientific research, attention to children, social security, labor policy and the judicial system.

Fidel explained the importance to the country's political, institutional and juridical order of the next Constitution of the Republic, as the basis for superior exercise of socialist legality, and highlighted the role of mass social organizations, the Revolutionary Armed Forces, the Ministry of the Interior, the Young Communists League, and the Party.

As for the functioning of the Party, statutes and policy for the formation, selection, placement, promotion and development of cadre were approved along with the nation's new political-administrative division, People's Power bodies, and the programmatic platform. Fidel also stressed the important role of Cuba's foreign policy, based on firm principles and the alignment of Cuban positions with the international needs of the struggle for socialism and national liberation, while calling for the unity of progressive forces.

At the end of the six days, the feeling shared by those of us who had the privilege of being there was that we had grown as revolutionaries, and that our duty, for the rest of our lives, was to make a reality of the letter and spirit of what was agreed upon in the historic and unforgettable First Congress.

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