

[Cuba: 570 children the counterrevolution attempted to kill](#)



"I have no doubt that this fire was coldly calculated sabotage; but once again, we stopped the macabre plans of imperialism. What monsters!"

The history of hatred toward Cuba of the most violent enemies of the Revolution is only one, from the first act of terror to the recent armed assault on our embassy in Washington. The motives behind all the attacks are the same (intolerance, commitment to the empire of capital, impunity for vice and the exploitation of man), and although the perpetrators and hit men have varied, the terrorist threat against the island remains the same.

Cubans, and in particular residents of the Havana neighborhood of Marianao, will never forget what happened on May 8, 1980, when counterrevolutionary elements set fire to the Le Van Tam preschool. The rapid intervention of students, residents and firefighters prevented a tragedy from occurring.

The fire began at 4:45 p.m., from the theater on the ground floor of the ten-story building. The flames quickly blocked the central stairwell and the two elevators. At that time there were 570 children in the building, including 177 boarded on site, and many of the 156 workers and assistants who worked at the center.

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Firefighters

used several ladders to access the school from the outside.
Photo: Fernández, Aramís.

A group of students from the nearby José Aguilera Maceiras Secondary School, were among the first to offer help. As soon as they saw the flames, without thinking twice, they ran to enter the building.

This is how Etián Nodarse Chirino, then 14 years of age, tells it: "I quickly jumped over the wall, and went into the bank, which faced one side of the preschool, and through it to get to the stairs. The smoke was already thick. I went up to the first floor and with the firemen and other people, started to take the children out into a courtyard, since they were already beginning to smell the smoke coming through the doors. We started to go down, with the little ones, only months old, who could not walk, tied with rope and sheets. One by one we lowered them carefully, and they were taken away from the building.

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Students

from the José Antonio Aguilera Maceiras Secondary school,
who participated in the rescue. Photo: Mario Ferrer Photo: Mario Ferrer

"Then we went up to the fourth floor, because help was needed there, and we carried them down the stairs in our arms. I could see how those who took part in the rescue were determined and courageous. The danger was no obstacle to saving everyone.

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Alfredo Garcia Tarajano had not taken his daughter to the preschool that day, since she was sick. As he was preparing to head to the pharmacy, a neighbor knocked loudly on his door, shouting that there was a fire in the building.

A volunteer firefighter at his workplace, he immediately joined the rescue effort, and amidst the frantic effort, he was stopped short by an impressive figure: "I found Fidel standing in front of me at the back of the building. I didn't know what to do. He held out his hand to me and I said my hand was muddy. He said, 'What mud, what mud,' and shook my hand firmly.

"The first thing Fidel asked was if there were any children injured or burned. He asked everyone who came by the same question. When he was convinced that the children were not in danger, he asked my opinion of the event. I replied that it was clearly sabotage, the evidence was there. The fire was premeditated."



Educators, from left to right, Ramona Castellanos, Tomasa Molínet, Faustina Carmona, Julia Sánchez, Danelis González, the director, Miriam Gómez, and Caridad Corvo, caring for the country's future with much love and dedication. Photo: Pedro Beruvides

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Jesús Fernández, an electrician at the preschool, agreed: "There was no electrical installation where the fire started, plus the electricity to light the theater was off. I had personally shut it off hours before.

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