

### Venezuela (1959)

Vargas

January 23

- Fidel departs from the Columbia Airport to make his first visit abroad as Head of the Cuban Revolution. Pedro Miret, Celia Sánchez, Paco Cabrera, Violeta Casals, Luis Orlando Rodríguez among others compose his delegation. They travelled in a Venezuelan Aeropostal Super Constellation.
- Before landing in Venezuelan territory, he sends a radio message to the people of Venezuela; which is broadcast by several radio stations, in which he says: "When we flew over the Caracas mountains I had the impression that I was in the Sierra Maestra. I send my deepest gratitude to the people of Caracas and Venezuela for the opportunity you have given me to attend the anniversary of your liberation. I am very moved by this blue sky which looks even more beautiful because it is embellished by freedom."
- At 1:25pm the plane carrying the leader of the Cuban Revolution lands in the Maiquetía Airport where thousands of Venezuelans had been waiting for him since the early hours. When he steps out of the plane the crowd screams: "Long Live Cuba! Long Live Venezuela! Long Live Fidel!". He is received by Rear Admiral Wolfgang Larrazábal, who took part in the toppling of Dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez, and combatant Fabricio Ojeda, president of the Patriotic Junta that contributed to the victory of January 23.

Caracas

- As the group travels from Maiquetía to Caracas, thousands of people come to cheer Fidel brandishing flags from Latin America and placards supporting the Cuban Revolution.
- The Government Junta offers him lunch in the elegant El Pinar restaurant. Foreign Minister René de Sola and the Minister of the Interior Augusto Márquez Cañizares sat either side of Fidel. Also attending the lunch are Wolfgang Larrazábal, Fabricio Ojeda, Gustavo Machado, who is the General Secretary of the Communist Party, Miguel Otero Silva who is the Editor-in-Chief of El Nacional newspapers and other politicians.
- He takes part in a mass popular rally held in the Plaza Aérea del Silencio de Caracas. The press calculates there are more than 300 thousand participants. Fabricio Ojeda, Wolfgang Larrazábal, Gustavo Machado, Jovito Villalba (top leader of Democratic Republican Union-URD), union leaders José González Navarro and Jesús Carmona, and Cuban independence fighters José Enrique Mendoza, Orestes Valera and Luis Orlando Rodríguez speak during the rally. A roaring ovation precedes Fidel Castro's speech. For two hours, Fidel recounts the struggle for independence in Cuba and upholds the right to apply revolutionary justice. He also speaks about the unitary thought of Bolívar and Martí and says:  
  
"If only the destiny of our peoples could be one sole destiny! How much longer are we going to be in lethargy? How much longer divided, the victims of powerful interests? Given that the unity of our peoples has been fruitful, doesn't the unity of nations have to be more so? That is Bolivarian thinking. Venezuela must be the leader country of the peoples of America..."

- He speaks in the Universidad Central de Caracas

January 24

- Fidel is received in the Caracas Municipal Council where he is declared Guest of Honor in a Solemn Session. He thanks them for the distinction and says: "...the history of America has been written with pain, with sweat, with tears, with blood!"
- At noon he attends a Joint Session of the two chambers of the Venezuelan Congress to pay him tribute. The President of the Chamber, Rafael Caldera, opens the session and gives the floor to Domingo Alberto Rangel, from Democratic Action, who speaks on behalf of all the members of the congress. Later, Fidel takes the floor and makes an exhaustive analysis of the drama of Our America. To conclude, he reads a document he wrote five days after the March 10, 1952 Coup d'Etat.
- In the afternoon he visits the Ciudad Universitaria. He is welcomed in the Main lecture Hall by Rector Francisco De Venanzi and the University Council, the entire staff and student body who give him an outstanding, rapturous ovation. "This reminds me of the meeting in the Cadenas Plaza of the University of Havana," says Fidel.
- The Rector announces the creation of the Committee for the Liberation of Santo Domingo. Fidel makes the first donation to the Committee, five Bolívars, followed by Rear Admiral Larrazábal.
- Chilean poet Pablo Neruda is among the guests. At the podium, he reads the poem "Un canto para Bolívar (a song for Bolívar)." Before reading the poem, Neruda says: "In this painful and victorious time in which the people of America are living, with changes of place, my poem could be understood as directed to Fidel Castro, because in struggles for freedom the destiny of one man always emerges to attest to the spirit of grandeur in the history of our peoples."
- In his speech, Fidel explains the genesis and direction of the Revolution. He also speaks about the need for solidarity with the struggle of the people of the Dominican Republic and the need to create a news agency at the service of democracy and the American peoples. He expresses his pleasure at visiting the University: "No place in Venezuela has been more familiar to me than the University. As someone who has been a student, there is no other place where I could better find myself than meeting here with you."
- From the Ciudad Universitaria he leaves for the Miraflores Palace, where he meets with the Government Junta.
- In the evening, the Cuban ambassador Francisco Pividal offers a reception in his honor. The residence is too small for all the guests.
- An impromptu press conference is held on the flat roof of the residence of the Cuban ambassador. More than 50 journalists from different countries attend.

January 25

- Early in the morning he takes a cablecar to the top of the majestic El Ávila hill. From the Humboldt Hotel he admires the view of the city of Caracas and its surrounding hills, on one side, and the sea on the other. He strolls around the mountains of the place.

January 26

- He holds a private meeting with president elect of Venezuela Rómulo Betancourt in his residence in Baruta.

January 27

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- At 1:00 am of that Tuesday, Fidel and his delegation are ready to return to Cuba from the Maiquetía Airport, after his historic visit to Venezuela. In a unexpected plane accident, Commander Paco Cabrera dies after being hit by the propellers of a plane.
- He arrives back in Cuba after the visit to Venezuela, the first he has made after the triumph of the Revolution.

### **Países:**

Venezuela

### **Objetivos:**

Private Visit. First trip overseas after revolutionary victory.

### **Continente:**

América

Friday, January 23, 1959 to Tuesday, January 27, 1959

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