

'Fidel Castro set to make his triumphant entry into Havana', from Le Monde (3 January 1959)

Caption: On 3 January 1959, the French daily newspaper Le Monde reports on the toppling of the military dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista by the revolutionary Fidel Castro in Cuba.

Source: Le Monde. dir. de publ. Beuve-Méry, Hubert. 03.01.1959, n° 4 338. Paris: Le Monde. "Fidel Castro va faire à la Havane son entrée triomphale", p. 1.

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After the collapse of the provisional military junta in Cuba

Fidel Castro set to make his triumphant entry into Havana

After some hours of confusion, Fidel Castro has consolidated his victory over General Batista, who yesterday sought refuge in the Dominican Republic after relinquishing power to a provisional military junta headed by General Cantillo. On Friday morning, the leader of the Cuban rebels left Santiago de Cuba, which fell during the night to his partisans, and where Mr Urrutia was proclaimed provisional President of the Republic of Cuba upon the surrender of the government garrison.

This afternoon, Fidel Castro is preparing to make his triumphant entry into Havana, where the population is waiting for him with indescribable enthusiasm. This morning, he received a message from the new Cuban army commander, Colonel Ramon Barguin, a former military attaché in Washington, who has spent the past two years in prison for attempting a coup against General Batista. In his message, the Colonel informed Mr Castro that he would join him in forming a revolutionary junta and proclaim, in Havana, Mr Urrutia's provisional presidency.

Colonel Barguin was released from prison on the orders of General Cantillo, who himself had abandoned the command of Cuban troops after trying in vain to establish the authority of Mr Carlos Piedra, chosen by the military junta that inherited power from Batista. The offer of a cease-fire from Mr Piedra was rejected out of hand by Fidel Castro, who demanded the unconditional surrender of all government forces.

The call for a general strike launched by the leader of the 26 July Movement was being followed in Havana, where shops, cinemas and restaurants closed their doors. At Havana airport, the three aircraft authorised to land brought back several dozen Cuban exiles, including the former Cuban President, Mr Carlos Prio Socarras.