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**Influence of Martí on Abel Santamaría Autor: Juventud Rebelde Publicado: 20/10/2017 | 03:48 pm**

## Influence of Martí on Abel Santamaría

The Apostle's legacy began to influence Abel at the school of the Constancia Sugar mill he learned about misery reigning over the gloomy huts and shared with the poor, those he was always willing to help

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ENCRUCIJADA, Villa Clara.— That revealing passage of what was to come should appear in the biography of Abel Santamaría Cuadrado; retold proudly by his mother Joaquina.

At his teens Abel came home happy since he had won a contest on the Apostle José Martí with a composition.

Years later his mother revealed the intimate and brief dialogue: “Mum, I won this, look. He showed me the diploma named *Los Tres Reyes de la Patria* (The Kings of the Motherland) awarded by the Ministry of Education. I thought you had won a scholarship! Then he told me: “I don’t mind, mum, I won this for writing about Martí...” And these last words said in his young age revealed the influence of Martí on him.

The mention of the scholarship by Joaquina reflects the family’s sorrow for the impossibility of financing him the cost of education after the sixth grade. This fact, away from discouraging him, allowed him to grow aware of the evils of those years.

### That Blondie

Abel, the third child of the marriage between Benigno Santamaría Pérez and Joaquina Cuadrado Alonso, was born in Encrucijada on October 20, 1927, the date on which the National Anthem was first sung in 1868. A happy

coincidence, since a true patriot was born on that date.

After his birth, in his early childhood, the family moved to the Constancia sugar mill, which bears his name today.

Now, as one moves around the places where he studied, worked, played ball, danced, bathed in the river or flirted with some girl, the most striking remembrances emerge about how he was in his childhood and youth, which are in the testimonies exposed by relatives, teachers and friends with whom he shared knowledge, games and concerns.

### **Without desk**

The insistence on knowledge was a quality that always accompanied the second in command of the attack on the Moncada Barracks, as confirmed by this anecdote: at six years, he insisted his mother so much to enter the school, that she had to speak with the teacher, but registration was closed.

At the insistence of Joaquina, the teacher Matilde Borroto offered a space on the floor, because there were no desks in the first grade classroom. It was then that in a gesture of solidarity his classmate, Santiago Quincosio, shared his seat with him.

His primary teacher, Eusebio Lima Recio, enjoyed telling that he saw in that blondie, of green eyes, a kind, intelligent child cut out to be a leader, who reacted against any abuse and act of injustice.

Lucila Lima remembers that her father Eusebio told him that he was also the last to leave the classroom - especially on weekends - so that his father could tell him what book or lesson Marti should read. He referred to Abel also as very respectful and kind.

That empathy between the teacher and the student ended up making them great friends. The last time the Hero was in Encrucijada he checked on his elementary teacher. They talked a lot, particularly about Batista's tyranny, and then my father told me that he was surprised by Abel's maturity in his opinions about the dictatorship, Lucila recalls.

From his patriotic character, this testimony of his sister Haydée is quite revealing: "Since his childhood patriotic concerns arose in him and he spoke enthusiastically of Jose Marti and Antonio Maceo, so much that in the fourth or fifth grade, at the end of the course he said: I am Maceo, I am Maceo, I want to play Maceo! "

### **He will never mess with us**

His childhood friend, Antonio García Lorenzo, told the historian and journalist Narciso Fernández that "Abel, like everyone else, liked to play baseball. He pitched a few times and, as always, there was one among us who was more naughty than the others, a big man. One of those that the out had to be out because he said so.

"I'm sick and tired of this one," Abel told me one day, "you'll see when he says it again; and actually they came to blows. The other was stronger and gave him a hard blow on his face. "You lost," I said, and he said, "No, you'll see how he never messes with us again." And so it was.

From that generous blondie, hither and thither the evocations come up fully portraying that quality of his: "Give him what he wants and deduct it from my salary."

In this way he reacted by witnessing that Casiano Luzarraga, the shop owner, refused to trust a humble worker with a warrant until the day of his payment.

The cart driver Martín Vergara Sarria never forgets those fateful times in which he waited for the owner to be out of the store to go, because Abel always gave him an advance.

### **His great meeting with Fidel**

In the public school of the Constancia sugar mill he met José Martí and began to follow his legacy; these days on which he learned about misery reigning over the gloomy huts and shared with the poor, those he was always willing to help.

His proletarian spirit began to take roots in that mill, first in his humble post as a janitor, later to deliver the merchandises, and finally as a clerk.

Jesus Menendez's assassination greatly outraged him, to the extent that he offered to avenge his death, since he admired for his struggles in favor of the sugar workers.

One day in 1947 he went to Havana for better economic horizons, when he was at age of 20 years being a fervent follower of Martí.

Then came that meeting with his brother Fidel, who from the beginning knew how to assess the greatness and integrity of that young man in whom he placed all his trust.

Abel committed himself with such impetus to the organization of the struggle against the Batista tyranny that the historical leader of the Revolution called it the soul of the Movement that attacked the Moncada Barracks on July 26, 1953.

**Translated by ESTI**

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