



The guerrilla Fidel Castro crosses the Yara River in the Sierra Mestra (left); Ernesto Che Guevara on New Year's Day, 1957 (right).

RAFAEL FRAGUAS, Madrid  
If a picture tells a thousand words, then the images of Enrique Meneses, who was born in Madrid in 1929 and became one of the world's greatest photojournalists, are no exception. His arresting images are on show until September at the Press Association of Madrid.

Unfortunately, the headquarters of the association are undergoing renovation work, meaning that Meneses' photographs have been relegated to the ground floor and staircase of this majestic building on Calle Juan Bravo. But despite the inconvenience, the exhibition is a must-see for lovers of the power of black and white and light and dark, as immortalized on camera film. Indeed, in Meneses' hands, images become art.

Put together in this way, the photos on show at the Press Association constitute one of the best collections of photo-journalist

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portraits from the 20th century — in particular the 1950s and 1960s. The subjects that came before Meneses' lens include John Fitzgerald Kennedy and his beautiful wife, Jackie Bouvier; Nina Khrushchev and her chubby husband, Nikita (the Soviet leader who is famously alleged to have removed his shoe and banged it on the desk at the United Nations); the Spanish Queen, Sofia, as a young adolescent; and Martin Luther King on the day in 1963 when he made his influential and famous "I have a dream" speech, delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC.

An extraordinary series of photographs captures the actors Charlton Heston, Marlon Brando and Sammy Davis Jr. The three men look crestfallen — not so much with fear as with their

## The art of news reporting

The Press Association pays tribute to the images of one of the 20th century's greatest photojournalists, Enrique Meneses



Celia Sánchez with Vilma Espín (right), who would become Raúl Castro's wife. Espín died last June.

assumed political responsibility — as they take part in a march in militant defense of African Americans in the United States, a country where Meneses has lived, as well as France, Portugal and Egypt.

Some doctors say that the human eye carries out a series of restless and apparently arbitrary movements during the night, when one is in the deepest phase of sleep. But these movements are not arbitrary: the retina, they claim, delves into its depths to provide the sleeper with images for the night-time wanderings of his or her subconscious. Something similar hap-

pens in the photography of Enrique Meneses.

In the same way that the human eye selects images during the silence of the night, his photographs refresh our memory of those years in which society desired peace and change. His camera shutter opens as though in time with the rhythm of his heartbeat — that of a tough and committed reporter.

Meneses was in line for a career as a diplomat, but fortunately his father's ambitions did not come to fruition. Instead, his son decided to use an Olympus 54 to tell the story of his time exploring deepest, darkest Africa and America.

Meneses' name went on to feature on the pages of *Paris Match*, earning him the accolade of having produced the "best photo-journalism of all time," in the words of Eugenio Suárez, who worked as Madrid correspondent for the French weekly journal for eight years.

In his authority as director of *Sábado Gráfico* magazine and founder of *El Caso*, Suárez stresses that Meneses "acquired worldwide renown and never lost it from the end of the 1950s." He first won that renown in what was then the afflicted island of Cuba. He went up into the mountains where the son of a Gali-

cian, Fidel Castro Ruz, formed a band of guerillas to overthrow the tyrant, Rubén Fulgencio Batista, and bring about a revolution to turn the island into a Communist paradigm, just 70 miles from the United States.

In the hot Sierra Maestra, Meneses not only won the confidence of the rebels, so that he could photograph them and live among them, but he also managed to spirit photographs of Fidel and his brother Raúl from the jungle to the printing press in Paris.

As well as capturing the Castro brothers, he immortalized Ernesto Che Guevara, Camilo Cienfuegos, Vilma Espín and Celia Sánchez, to name but a few. He also took photographs of the man without whom the Cuban revolution would have failed: the astute rural bandit Crescencio Pérez. Meneses shows the members of the guerilla movement as they really were back then: disci-

plined and brave, self-sacrificing and aware of all the opposition's movements, knowing that death lay in wait around every corner. Meneses' work is all the more admirable given the risky nature of his mission. His images provide witness accounts that coincide with the moment in which history became journalism. "I never felt alone in dangerous places," explains Meneses today. "The pace of the work at hand didn't let me get depressed when my feelings and reactions to things lost their intensity." When asked if he would return to Cuba to photograph Castro once more, the veteran replies: "I now only take photos of pretty girls."

As well as capturing the Castro brothers on film, he also immortalized Ernesto Che Guevara

Enrique Meneses. Until September at the Press Association, C/ Juan Bravo, 6, Madrid. Tel: 91 585 00 10 www.apmadrid.es