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Cuba's Fidel Castro makes 90th birthday appearance at cultural gala

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Leader of Cuban Revolution Fidel Castro turned 90 on Saturday and thousands of Cubans sang and danced in his honour.

The leader of the 1959 revolution thanked fellow Cubans for their warm wishes, while he lambasted his old foe, the United States in a column carried by state-run media.

The Birthday celebration began on Friday night with a free concert beside Havana's seafront Malecon.

But before midnight, the music and dance stopped, with a countdown to the moment Fidel Castro turned 90.

This giant screen showed remarkable highlights of Castro's glorious life.

Local media all carried Castro's article on his birthday, in which he reviewed his life experience and thanked his people for their best wishes.

At the end of the article, he spoke highly of the wisdom of the Chinese and Russian people, and criticized the United States for the crimes it has committed.

The iconic leftist revolutionary, who handed over power in 2008 to his younger brother Raul due to ill health,

Sat in the front row of the Karl Marx theater, flanked by Raul and regional ally Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro.

He was serenaded by Cuban youth choral group, "La Colmenita" and Cuban musician, Omara Portuondo.

Raul's most broadly feted accomplishment since taking power has been implementing a detente with the United States after a half century of confrontation.

Considered more pragmatic, the younger Castro also introduced market-style reforms to the state-dominated economy and increased personal freedoms, such as the right to travel abroad.

And at that, many Cubans still revere Fidel for freeing Cuba from U.S. domination and introducing universal, free healthcare and education.

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In many ways, the celebration is warm but low-keyed, with no major rallies or parades.

Timed to coincide with the celebration, one of Cuba's leading cigar rollers set a new Guinness Book Record rolling out the world's longest cigar exactly 90 meters in length for Fidel Castro's 90th birthday.

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