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SERVICE

FIDEL OF CUBA

Portrait of a Controversy

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The Image and the Man

Millions of people have seen and heard Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz. Born in 1927 when the tin lizzie still was with us and when in Cuba's Oriente Province, his birthplace, the horse and buggy were in use, Fidel left a rural boyhood as the electronic age sowed its blessings. He matured along with the radio, television, and the helicopter and manipulates all as he rules Cuba.

No other political figure surpasses Fidel in the mastery of these means for communicating an image and a message to the masses. Most readers must have in their minds the pictures they have seen of the famous bearded face, the full and usually open mouth, the lively motions of his head and the gesturing hands, the large expressive eyes and the half-dollar Havana cigar.

It shouldn't be necessary, therefore, to describe Fidel Castro. And yet I have uncovered more than the customary errors in the appraisals others have made of the man.

I remember from my youth the shock of seeing the late President Calvin Coolidge for the first

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Fidel Castro Ruz  
(posing before a bust of José Martí, Cuba's patriot-saint)

time. I had carried in my mind a picture of a thin, colorless, passive, dry man. The man I saw had reddish hair, bright roving eyes in a highly colored lively face, and he was constantly on the move, peering about the huge stadium where he sat, chatting animatedly with his neighbors, rising nervously and moving quickly as he saw his friends.

Fidel Castro, the public figure, is not unlike the image given to the world. But Fidel Castro, the man, could be, as Silent Cal was for me, a shocker.

To start with the things visible to the eye, Fidel unadorned surely would disillusion many of his feminine admirers. His handsome beard, for instance, hides a sloping chin and reduces the marked prominence of his nose. His open-neck army shirt and tailored fatigues are becoming and romantic; a Fidel wearing the glasses he needs for reading, a necktie and business suit wouldn't be the Maximum Leader the ladies seem to love.

He knows this and refuses to change costumes even for occasions such as first nights, diplomatic parties or his sister's fashionable wedding. Last spring he grossly offended her and their mother by coming to the reception in the usual boots and fatigues, hatless and tieless.

His public image is one of three assets that Fidel dares not dilute. The other two are his oratory and his humanitarian nationalism. Were he to weaken any of these through carelessness or error, his usefulness to the clique he represents would decline, perhaps disastrously. The life he has created for himself might be shattered, an intolerable prospect for a lazy, deluded young man without family, true friends, or prospects to fall back upon.

Fidel, I think, is definitely lazy. In the mountains he had months to read, smoke, sleep, and eat--and of course to talk, largely with adoring newsmen. He loved it and he must have hated Fulgencio Batista even more, for surrendering so unexpectedly and shifting his burdens to Fidel. But Fidel soon shifted them to others and regained for himself the chaotic and easy life of the rebel chieftain who doesn't have to dress for dinner, read tiresome reports, or too deeply ponder upon such onerous things as budgets, policies, and his country's future.

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Fidel Castro has been described as tall and even sometimes as tense and slender. I would call him pudgy. He probably is less than six feet tall even in the field boots he wears everywhere. The roll around his waist has become pronounced as he has acquired flesh. His frame is heavy, not spare.

He has a sprightly gait, is nimble on his feet, terse and tense in the

routine contacts of life, as in giving directions to his driver or an order to a waiter. But he is relaxed and indifferent to time or place when he feels like talking, as he often does. A friend of mine and of his (at the time of this incident) tells of how, while he was driving to his Havana home around midnight, he was overtaken by Fidel's caravan of three cars. Fidel signalled my friend to stop, invited him into his car, and sat talking until near dawn.

Fidel's secretaries, like their opposite numbers in other lands, convey to impatient visitors the impression that their boss is incessantly busy, rushing from one vital appointment or conference to another. But it is my impression that Fidel may be relaxing in one of his many penthouse hideaways while his visitors wait. Or he may be at a friend's house, amusing himself by talking to the family and playing with the children while a live audience of thousands awaits his appearance or a television panel wastes hours until the star appears.

When he is scheduled to begin a speech at 9 p.m. Cubans tune in at 11 or 12 and then often have to wait. This may be a calculated technique but I think it more likely that Fidel's indifference to obligations simply reflects his relaxed attitude toward life.

Can a man so loath to stir himself have a paranoid personality? Two psychoanalysts are said to have had Fidel as a patient during the year following his victory. One, a woman from New York, is reported to have found nothing much wrong with the Leader. But then she also is said to have come unprofessionally under the spell of his personality. The findings of the other analyst, a Cuban now dead, are known only to Fidel who has the notes the analyst made on his case.

The widow of the analyst, who discovered the notebook which her husband had guarded under his pillow while dying from a heart attack, sought advice from her father confessor on what to do with it. He suggested, the widow reports, that she guard it carefully. Instead she gave it to Fidel.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew St. George, a free-lance photographer and writer, wrote of the New York psychoanalyst in the July 1960 issue of Coronet Magazine. Mr. St. George came to know Fidel by remaining with him for many months in the Sierra Maestra before the downfall of Batista. I have discussed his account with two Cubans equally well acquainted with Fidel but who cannot be named. They confirm in general terms St. George's story of the New Yorker.

The story of the Cuban psychoanalyst was related to me by a Cuban in the presence of a number of other Cubans, including the widow of the late psychoanalyst. I was unable to further confirm the existence of the notebook mentioned, though I found a number of sources which had heard of the episode. My informant said Fidel secretly visited the analyst late at night several times a week over a period of ten months, starting immediately after he seized power.

Other psychologists and psychoanalysts observing Fidel's conduct say they recognize in him the symptoms of a paranoid personality. Fidel, they say, slips easily from his real life of ease, power, and satisfaction to a world made up systematically of his illusions, projections of his personal conflicts, but which he ascribes to hostilities arising outside himself. Those who can please him by playing his game, by accepting as real his delusions and the imagined hostility of others, can manipulate Fidel, or so it has been hypothesized by these observers who admittedly are working with less than adequate evidence and data.

Going back into Fidel's life they find that he was born to a servant in his father's household before the marriage of his parents and while his father was married to another woman. And they look also at the father, now dead, and judge him to have been an unsuccessful parent for Fidel.<sup>2</sup>

Fidel's father had come to Cuba from Galicia, an impoverished coastal region in Spain adjoining Portugal. The Gallegos are a hardy and part Celtic people, known throughout the Iberian Peninsula for their propensity for emigration and propagation.

The lower-class Gallego and Gallega, who must constitute 95 per cent of the inhabitants of that rocky, windswept, Atlantic region of fjordlike bays called rías, and who have the highest rate of births out of wedlock in Spain, are a curious lot, as rigorous in Roman Catholic faith as they are liberal in personal relationships.

Gallegos acquire two wives simultaneously (and in a manner of speaking, two families) with the ease that other Spaniards acquire a mistress. A married Gallego who comes to Cuba is likely to take a new wife without divorcing the one he left behind. While there is no evidence that Fidel's father, the late Don Angel Castro y Argiz, followed the pattern of his countrymen before emigrating to Cuba, he did share their views on mating, wives, and families. In short, he sired two families in Cuba while the wives and mothers of both still lived, and there was no divorce.

The practice is not rare in Cuba although it is not condoned by urban society. Fidel's mother, who had been the Castro's maid, Lina Ruz Gonzáles,

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<sup>2</sup> For this account of Fidel's birth and of his family I am indebted to the lay and clerical archivists of Santiago de Cuba; to several individuals acquainted with the Castros who asked that their names be withheld; to confirmatory sources in a variety of diplomatic missions in Havana; to biographers of Fidel available for consultation and to scores of Cubans with whom I discussed the Maximum Leader. The psychologists and psychoanalysts mentioned were all North Americans and include one invited to Havana by the writer for the purpose of studying Fidel at as close a range as I could arrange. She and I followed Fidel as well as we could for several days; we listened to him speak; we spoke to subordinates in his office and we discussed the findings of other observers.

was la Señora Lina Ruz de Castro by the time the boy was ready to enter a private school in Santiago de Cuba, the capital city of the province. When the first Señora de Castro died, Don Angel had married the mother of his second brood.

Everyone knew that Fidel's older half-brothers and half-sister had been born in wedlock and he had been born out of it, and to a servant girl at that. It couldn't have been too pleasant for the lad.

Fidel's father, moreover, seems to have been a ruthless man of peasant stock who sweat and clawed his way to wealth in Cuba. His methods were offensive enough, it now is related in Santiago de Cuba, to shock even the entrepreneurs and burghers of that Oriente city where the slave trade had persisted in slightly disguised form for years after its disappearance elsewhere in the region.

Smuggling, of Negroes from Haiti and Jamaica and of merchandise from everywhere; the exportation and exploitation of Cuban natural resources outside the law; the maltreatment of indentured workers who were treated much like slaves; bribery and nonpayment of taxes: all these evils had persisted in Cuba into the early 20th century but in Oriente Province they flourished.

One result today is that there are more Negroes in proportion to whites, more mulattoes, more impoverished mountain families, more illiteracy, more sickness and death in Oriente than elsewhere on the island. And in Oriente Fidel has concentrated his most ambitious projects for educating impoverished children and raising the standard of life of their parents.

Fidel attended several Roman Catholic schools in Santiago de Cuba and then was sent to one in Havana. His younger brother Raul, now Armed Forces Minister, had much the same experience.

Fidel, it is said by those who knew the family then, was fond of Raul and loved his younger sister Juanita. The rest of his family, his mother and his older brothers and sisters, including those of his father's first wife, were somewhat less than affectionate relatives.

One of his sisters, Emma (she of the wedding last spring), had been before her marriage the intimate friend of Luis Conte Agüero, Fidel's friend and defender when Fidel was in prison.<sup>3</sup> But she and Fidel apparently never were very close.

Of his two other brothers, Pedro Emilio Castro Argota, his father's son by his first wife, was much older than Fidel and there was little understanding between them. Pedro is said by his present associates to be openly anti-Fidelista now, as is Ramón, the other brother, who during the insurrection against Batista and when Fidel was in the mountains collaborated faithfully with Fidel.

Fidel's mother, now a buxom, stern-faced lady in black, is a devout Roman Catholic and seemingly also a firm adherent of the established order of the "old" Cuba. People say she disapproves of Fidel and he has been quoted, by an associate who shall be nameless, as calling his mother a name which need not be repeated here.<sup>4</sup>

Fidel has applied the Agrarian Reform Law with impartiality, insofar as his family estates are concerned. His mother, brothers, and sisters have lost much of the land their husband and father acquired, which could help to explain why Fidel is not beloved by all his clan. But his political posture, astride a movement offensive to nearly all Cubans in his family's class and to many Roman Catholics, is enough to explain his unpopularity with all the Castros but Raul and possibly Juanita. It is not too much to say that Fidel and Raul are seen as renegades by the other Castros, and as saintly liberators by many other Cubans.

The guajiros for instance, who are for the first time in the collective memory of these lean, dignified, Cuban peasants, actually wielding what looks and feels like political power, see Fidel as the instrument of their deliverance. For the first time, a Cuban government actually spends public funds for their benefit, actually gives a few of them possession of some decent land, actually invites them to Havana and showers promises and prestige upon them. These are benefits a guajiro can see and comprehend and for all of them he thanks Fidel Castro, who turned a political-social revolutionary reform movement founded and directed by the middle class-- a movement the guajiros hardly noticed--into a revolution for peasants.

The inhabitants of Cuba's bateys--the clusters of frame houses and stores around the sugar mills--and of the bohios--the wretched huts in the fields and hills that are home for Cuba's seasonal farm laborers--and of the shacks in the mountains where the truly impoverished, chronically unemployed, subsisted in filth and ignorance; all these forgotten people respect

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<sup>3</sup> Luis Conte Agüero, whose biography of Fidel, at first considered as an approved one and later withdrawn from sale in Cuba, is entirely flattering. He also published Cartas del Presidio (Havana: Editorial Lex, 1959) consisting of the letters Fidel wrote Luis and a sister from the prison in the Isle of Pines which Fidel entered in 1953 after his conviction for the attack on Moncada Barracks, Santiago de Cuba, July 26, 1953. Conte Agüero fled from Cuba in the spring of 1960 after raising questions of Communist infiltration in Fidel's Government. At this writing he is a leading anti-Fidelista exile in the United States.

<sup>4</sup> As told to the writer by a former high official of the Castro Government who claimed he heard Fidel speak in vulgar terms of his mother during a discussion in the Cabinet of an anti-Communist pastoral letter of the Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba, a longtime friend of Fidel's mother.

and honor the man who remembered them. They total a third or more of the population.

The agrarian reform has been for their benefit--theoretically. It has brought in some places new housing, decent sanitary facilities, adequate schools, hospitals, roads, beach resorts, and sometimes just a bit more cash. And let us not forget status: it is something to be a cooperativista instead of a seasonally hired hand, even if being a cooperativista brings nothing more than a new name for a hired hand and a new employer, a government man. Many Cubans in mid-summer 1960 still adored Fidel Castro for what he had done and for what he has promised to do. And not all of them were guajiros.

### The Man and His Works

"It is my conviction which I state now with full responsibility for what I am saying, that Fidel Castro is an instrument in the hands of God for the establishment of His reign among men."

The date was July 17, 1960. Fidel was in a hospital, recovering from a pulmonary disorder or, according to the cynics, from a bullet wound. Brother Raul was making "highly satisfactory" arrangements for the defense of the Castros; he had been to Czechoslovakia, he had gone to Moscow, and he was to go shortly to Cairo before returning to Havana.

Cuba had been made economically dependent upon Moscow and Peking. Prime Minister Nikita Khrushchev had said he would use missiles to protect Castro Cuba and Fidel had said he was pleased with such a "spontaneous" and generous offer.

In the context of these developments Rafael Cepeda, a Cuban Protestant leader, a dominant figure in the Presbyterian movement in Latin America, a president of the Council of Evangelical Churches in Cuba, declared his "conviction" that Fidel was one of God's instruments on earth.<sup>5</sup>

The Reverend Cepeda, a learned man, qualified his statement with examples of agnostics and heathens who had been used by God, and implied Fidel could be among them. His conviction was less startling than his timing in stating it. A year before there had been circulated in Cuba a colored print of Fidel bearing something resembling a halo and a marked resemblance to the martyred Jesus of Nazareth. In 1959 it was not uncommon to compare Fidel to the great reformers and idealists of history. But in 1960?

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<sup>5</sup> In "Fidel Castro and the Reign of God" a leading article in Bohemia Magazine Havana, July 17, 1960, 52d. no.29, pp. 6, 110, and 111.



By July 1960, scores of Cubans had lost faith in Fidel's motives. They believed Fidel to be a betrayer who had become the instrument not of God but of the Kremlin and Mao Tse-tung, and they were deserting Fidel and denouncing him from their places of refuge.<sup>6</sup>

Among those who could not subscribe to the Reverend Cepeda's views was José Miro Cardona, Castro's onetime Prime Minister, who in July asserted his conviction that Fidel was the instrument of international communism.<sup>7</sup>

However, the Reverend Cepeda was by no means alone in July 1960. Numerous other evangelical pastors in Cuba and a minority among the Roman Catholic clergy still seemed to have faith in the Leader.<sup>8</sup> Christian and Hebrew congregations had been torn apart over the issue of Fidel. The Revolution and its Leader had become an issue also among Cubans of all classes and provinces, among the intelligentsia, politicians, and politically alert students and workers of Latin America, and even among some North Americans, including experts on the area, Negro spokesmen, and journalists who had specialized on Cuba and its sister republics.

Who then is this Fidel Castro, this 34-year-old doctor of jurisprudence of the University of Havana, this divorced father of Fidelito, this blacksheep son and brother, this lazy, compulsive talker who wears a beard to hide a weak chin and disguise a fleshy nose? Who is this man and what has he done and what is he doing that he can please Nikita Khrushchev, Mao Tse-tung, and at least some men of God?

The question with the easiest answer is what Fidel has wrought in Cuba. It is not very difficult to show how he has done it. To explain what manner of person Fidel is and why he has done what he has done is harder. The remainder

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<sup>6</sup> During the week of July 17, 1960, Bohemia Magazine's editor-publisher, Miguel Angel Quevada (who once was strongly pro-Fidel), accused Fidel of betrayal of the Revolution and sought political asylum.

<sup>7</sup> Miro Cardona, who had been Prime Minister of Castro Cuba, Ambassador to Spain, and the Ambassador-Elect to the United States, went into exile in July 1960, as did several other leading Cuban ambassadors. Their statements left no doubt that Fidel's alliance with the Communists was the reason they defected.

<sup>8</sup> Outstanding Fidelistas even as late as July 1960 were numerous Franciscans whose fortnightly publication La Quincena took the most cautious line on communism without in any way attacking Fidel. Many of the Roman Catholic clergy in Cuba are from the Basque region of Spain, where priests have been persecuted by the Franco regime. Basque priests in Cuba reflect a Basque nationalist suspicion of Great Power blocs such as Fidel seemed to be combatting.

of this report concerns these questions and their answers, the "what," the "how," the "who," and the "why" of Fidel Castro:

1) Castro's Cuba; what Fidel has been able to do to his homeland since first his influence and power became a significant factor.

2) How Castro's Cuba was created, in easy stages, from the time the islanders began to respond to Fidel's leadership.

3) Who is Fidel Castro? The various personalities of Fidel that have made such a tremendous impact upon his countrymen and others.

4) The reasons why Fidel acted as he did; how he reacted and was acted upon to bring about the Castro Cuba of today.

#### Castro's Cuba: the "What" of Fidel Castro

After nearly six months of intensively searching for the currents below the surface of the turbulent Cuban Revolution, my estimate of the trend is not far from the judgment expressed by A. A. Berle, Jr., in an article published by The Reporter magazine in its issue of July 7, 1960. I think Mr. Berle goes a bit far in equating Cuba with Hungary and North Korea as a Communist satellite. But in the summer of this year it became increasingly apparent that the Communist minority in Cuba was succeeding in promoting international Communist policy under what Mr. Berle described as a war of aggression masquerading as a national movement.

The masquerade is on! Fidel Castro has led his island-nation in the name of a social revolution and nationalism into the power politics bloc of Moscow and Peking, there to play out its role of spearheading attacks on the United States, on Western Hemisphere solidarity, on the democracies of Latin America when they oppose Soviet pressures. He welcomes support from Communists, Peronistas, Fascists, or militarists.

This, then, is what Fidel Castro has wrought in Cuba in mid-1960. In mid-1959 the groundwork was being laid, the trend had set in, and the movement toward involvement in the Peking-Moscow axis had started. But in the Cuba of a year ago many offices of considerable power still were filled by pro-Western Cuban liberals; the United States had not yet been assigned the role of the imperialist aggressor whose impending "attack" was to be the pretext for turning to Moscow and Peking for assistance; and while it was undemocratic for Cubans to oppose communism it was not yet treasonable. Relative freedom of expression remained and future free elections seemed at least a probability.<sup>9</sup>

In the spring of 1959 Fidel visited the United States. In the early

summer of 1960 he sent his brother Raul to Russia and received in Havana, Red China's emissaries. In mid-1959 it was found advisable in Havana to deny that Fidel had hinted that Cuba was not bound by Organization of American States treaty commitments. In mid-1960, Cuba went to the United Nations Security Council in an abortive attempt to circumvent the OAS.

If one were to find in Cuba the kind of social order Fidel said he was seeking during his insurrection against Fulgencio Batista's dictatorship, one would see a nation of free, self-governing, independent people, who, with the friendly assistance of their American neighbors, would reform their society by legal means without sacrifice of civil rights; a bright new Cuba Libre of which the hemisphere, tyrants and reactionaries excepted, could be proud.<sup>10</sup> Many of Cuba's guajiros think Fidel has kept that promise. For they neither know nor care that the international posture of their benefactor might lead him and them to disaster.

#### How Castro Did It

Leaving for later discussion the subject of Fidel Castro's extraordinary personal talent for the work he has undertaken, I shall in this section comment on the methods used by the revolutionaries and the forces working upon them during the transition from Batista's Cuba to Castro's mid-1960 version.

Batista committed political suicide in 1957 and 1958 at the invitation of and with the assistance of Fidel Castro & Cia. United States diplomacy mid-wifed the birth of Castro's Cuba by unintentionally abetting Batista's self-destruction.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> In 1959 the slogan favored by Fidel was "Ejercito--para que?" ("An Army --what for?") while in the same year he spoke often of holding elections "within 18 months at the latest." In 1960 the popular slogan seen and heard throughout Cuba was "Elecciones--para que?" ("Elections--what for?").

<sup>10</sup> In October 1953 Fidel Castro defended himself before a tribunal in Santiago de Cuba trying him for armed insurrection against the Batista government on July 26, 1953. He performed one of the greatest oratorical feats on record by speaking to the judges for many hours and giving a speech known for its final phrase "History Will Absolve Me." While Fidel included in this, his "Mein Kampf," an outline of the reforms he intended for Cuban society, the tone and message largely was anti-dictatorship and pro-democracy and civil rights. The text of the speech is available in English in a booklet entitled Political, Economic, and Social Thought of Fidel Castro (Havana: Editorial Lex, 1959) which probably can be obtained from Cuban Government branches in the United States. It is worth reading in full.

<sup>11</sup> Most Cubans feel that the United States, by failing to intervene, in effect, condoned Batista's excesses and assisted the Fidelistas into power.

The stages by which the result was eventually accomplished were so imperceptible and so camouflaged by the revolutionary political warriors as to escape detection by Batista and Washington. The first-stage goals of Fidel and his political warriors were, in the order of their accomplishment, (a) to provoke Batista into retaliatory methods so extreme he would alienate the Cuban people and demoralize Cuban soldiers and officers; (b) to marshal public opinion, particularly in the United States, until Batista would be deprived of American military supplies and Castro would receive adequate supplies.<sup>12</sup>

Fidel had already used in 1953 the methods he adopted in the Sierra Maestra during 1957 and 1958, the two years of Batista's slow suicide. In 1953 he had led a small group of youthful, fanatical followers in the July 26th attack on a strong Army barracks. The result was admirable for his purposes -- fame for Fidel, death, often by torture, for some of his followers, and prison for the survivors. Thus were created dead and live martyrs in the Fidelista cause.

During the two years it took to induce Batista to ruin himself, Fidel used his revolutionaries to goad the dictator into indiscriminate retaliation. Fidel sent his followers into towns and villages to kill soldiers, to steal weapons, to plunder garrisons. In Havana Fidel's underground forces bombed public and private buildings, assassinated officials, raided the Presidential palace, seized army and police cars by hijacking in the city or destroyed them and killed their occupants in ambushes planted in the adjacent countryside. Batista's reaction was to murder and to torture; and his victims were not always members of the rebel forces.

Nearly all of Fidel's activists were students or young men and women, many just out of the university. Batista therefore ordered widespread reprisals against this entire class of Cubans. And thousands of mothers and fathers entered a hell of fear, to live with constant anxiety over the fate of their sons and daughters. Batista's reprisals took the form of beastly attacks on both girls and boys and often mutilation killings of boys after prolonged torture.

As Fidel had expected, Batista became Fidel's best recruiting sergeant. The young people of Cuba who could not be sent abroad by their parents flocked into the mountains to join Fidel. He directed them to come armed with at least a rifle. More and more isolated, individual attacks upon Batista's armed forces took place, to be followed by more and more frantic reprisals.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile Fidel brought to his stronghold in the mountains a series of unpaid foreign publicists who spread word of their sincere confidence in his

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<sup>12</sup> About 90 per cent of Castro's supplies during his rebellion came from the United States and were financed by funds raised in the United States. He got some help from Costa Rica and moral support from Venezuela.

ultimate victory. Batista responded to this needling with more hysterical efforts, bombings of the countryside, dragnet search and seizures in the cities.

All Cuba turned against Batista, as Fidel had planned; Batista's army stopped fighting and the rebels won. In a few places they courageously beat down Batista die-hard units making a last, hopeless stand, as in Santa Clara late in December 1958 after Batista had prepared to flee to the Dominican Republic on New Year's Eve.

The foreign journalists, including United States television crews, a New York editorial writer, a police reporter from Chicago, and a Latin America specialist from the same city, had joined in describing the Sierra Maestra warriors in Fidel's terms--fighters for Cuban freedom and justice, dedicated to the principles of personal liberty and a new, fair deal for the poor. After a while, official efforts in the United States to halt the flow of arms and supplies going to Fidel became noticeably less efficient. Finally, an American embargo halted arms sales to Batista, who, near the end of his rope, bought fighter aircraft from Britain.

And thus, the day of victory dawned in Cuba on January 1, 1959, Fidel's psychological warfare had gained its two first objectives, brilliantly and a little more rapidly than he had anticipated.<sup>14</sup>

Thenceforth the task was more difficult and the means used were more devious. The next objectives were (a) the transformation of Cuban society according to a pattern learned from able teachers in the mountains, if not before; (b) the exportation of the Cuban movement to other Latin American countries offering the choicest openings. Psychological warfare was used to reach these goals too.<sup>15</sup>

The methods employed were complex and their nature still is not definitely established. Fidel began by instituting a regime seemingly dedicated to substituting an honest administration for a very corrupt one and to justly

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<sup>13</sup> After Fidel's victory one of his warriors appearing in Havana was a lad of 13 who at 11 years of age had been sent out by the Fidelistas with a knife to terrorize lone soldiers to get their weapons, killing them when necessary. He said he had killed "about a half dozen" soldiers before he was given a rifle and accepted as a warrior by the Fidelistas.

<sup>14</sup> Fidel showed his anger at the rapidity of Batista's collapse; he insisted on carrying out plans for an attack on Santiago de Cuba even after the garrison there had deserted Batista; he rejected every effort to make the transition in Havana a smooth one but despite that, it was almost bloodless, the only casualties being among looters who were quickly routed. The takeover was in fact very well organized though it took several days for Fidel to finish a triumphant tour down the island to Havana.

punishing those who had sinned under the old regime. In the name of honesty and justice many things were done.

Some five to six hundred persons were executed; some thousands were imprisoned; some scores of thousands lost their properties, and many Cubans were driven to flee abroad, deserting their wealth. The bureaucracy was purged and persons deemed trustworthy given the responsible hiring-and-firing positions. The established military and police forces were dismissed and Fidel's warriors took their place.

Meanwhile taxes were collected in record amounts and imposed at record levels. And because Batista had left a near-empty till, strict limits were placed on foreign trade.

If these measures had been administered by political neutrals with no thought of extraneous objectives, they would have shifted political and economic power to some extent, considerably frightening some Cubans and antagonizing even more. As it turned out, however, these revolutionary measures were in many instances under the administration of politically directed persons moving toward the two second-stage goals. The reaction went beyond mere fright and hostility among the immediate and potential victims of the revolutionary program. As property owners, businessmen, exporters, and importers awaited their fate, some were so paralyzed by what they contemplated that their very inaction was a manner of sabotage; others became involved in an indignant political opposition to the revolution that threatened to destroy them.

Such reactions were sought and encouraged by Fidel's second-stage political warriors, led by Dr. Ernesto "Che" Guevara and his disciple, Raul Castro Ruz. Cuba's middle and upper classes did what these Fidelistas wanted them to do, just as Batista had in the days of the rebellion.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> In his "History Will Absolve Me" speech in 1953 Fidel refers to his long-range goals for Cuba and Latin America. His emphasis on his role as a "liberator" for other "colonial" peoples was continued during the years of exile and insurrection. He seems to have acquired the notion that he was to become another Bolívar, another savior of the Latin American peoples.

<sup>16</sup> Scores of bankers, businessmen, and others, both Cubans and North Americans, remarked on Guevara's extraordinary frankness. "He says what he thinks," they commented after talking with him or hearing him on television. It was an appropriate technique if he wanted to instill a paralyzing fear in listeners linked to free enterprise. By constantly predicting collectivization and nationalization he won the unintentional co-operation of his victims.

The Government countered with more "interventions" (seizures) of properties that might be sabotaged by their frightened owners and managers; with even more arrests and the suppression of the free press, radio and television; with the further militarization of peasants, workers, and students to meet the threat of counterrevolution.

Into this satisfactory picture, Fidelista political warriors injected the threat of armed attack from the United States, using whatever incidents (and they were plentiful) seemed best for the purpose. The American Government did not play into their hands as it had earlier by continuing to support Batista and refraining from interfering in his course toward self-destruction. But despite every effort by Washington to prevent incidents, the Cuban political warfare campaign rolled on, making the most of any pretext to justify the military preparations required for the planned campaign to intervene in the rest of Latin America as a spearhead for the Moscow-Peking axis.

Disputes centering on the oil refineries and the sugar quota provided a focus for a diplomatic-economic crisis that served to move Cuba well into the Soviet-Red Chinese economic orbit. The methods employed in these cases illustrate Guevara's tactics.

President Eisenhower's call on Congress for authority to deprive Cuba of its privileged place in the United States sugar market did not dismay the Cuban Government. After Guevara had tried and failed to provoke such action by publicly remarking that the quota was a device for exploiting the Cubans, he moved steadily toward freezing the most profitable sectors of Cuban-American trade and toward the seizure of properties owned by North Americans.

These acts were accompanied by the steadily more shrill campaign against the United States, highlighted by the efforts of President Dorticós in Latin America to organize groups to terrorize pro-Washington governments. In this and other ways, and with the able assistance of Fidel's orations, the pressures were increased on the Eisenhower administration to take some action against Cuba. The initial Presidential action of cutting off Point IV aid to Cuba was ineffectual. The level of aid had been so low that its loss meant nothing to Cuba; and the gesture of withdrawal was not enough to assuage outraged United States legislators and businessmen. The reduction of the Cuban sugar quota became inevitable, as Guevara hoped it would, and the pressure upon the Cubans to seek assistance elsewhere became irresistible.<sup>17</sup>

As soon as he had negotiated a trade pact with Soviet Russia, Guevara knew he had the oil refineries where he wanted them. For he had made plans to import Russian oil in exchange for sugar, on the grounds that Cuba could preserve dollars by using petroleum from Russia in place of petroleum from Venezuela, there being a price difference, he said, amounting in a year to \$20 million. Guevara's figures are questionable. The loss of sugar income

probably more than offsets any gains on the oil deal. But Guevara made his point and it remains possible that the Kremlin, for political reasons, gave it to him to make.

Guevara meanwhile had withheld dollar payments due the three foreign refineries (two American, one British-Dutch) for the petroleum they had been importing into Cuba from Venezuela where the three have wells. In all, the companies were owed about sixty million dollars and they were growing a little impatient as each month the debt increased. They were actually financing the Cuban Government which they knew was buying oil in Russia for them to refine. They were all set for Guevara's final move.<sup>18</sup>

He offered to make token payments to the companies, subtly linking the offer to a demand that they refine the Soviet oil, later described as oil belonging to the Cuban State. The companies accepted the offer and rejected the demand. The refineries were seized; the supply of Venezuelan oil ceased; Fidel declared that Cuba was being blockaded; and the final entry of Cuba into the Communist bloc was consummated in Havana, Fidel presiding.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The Department of State and the Executive of the United States exercised monumental patience as the Cubans issued provocative statements and moved to take over North American properties. It was apparent that the policy was to avoid, if at all possible, a cut in the sugar quota which would give Guevara and Fidel Castro a pretext, plausible to the Cubans, for moving into the Soviet-Red China economic orbit. When a cut finally was announced, it was justified not as a retaliation but as a move to assure future supplies, since Cuba could not be depended upon as a source.

<sup>18</sup> Guevara had declared void the exclusive dealership contracts between the refineries in Cuba and gasoline station owners. Meanwhile, a government institute was formed to handle the sale and distribution of gasoline and other products. It was clear that if the companies refined Russian oil they would become suppliers to their competitors with no promise of a profit from the transaction.

<sup>19</sup> The Government invoked a pre-Castro law requiring the refineries to handle petroleum of the Cuban State. Since the oil coming from Russia was acquired by the Cuban Government, it was charged that the refineries violated the law in refusing to refine it. The companies replied either that they had been exempted by specific agreement with the Cuban Government from refining any petroleum but their own, or that Russian oil was not Cuban oil and hence was not covered by the law. Privately, the company managers said the Russian oil's chemical content would damage their equipment and that in any event they were not prepared to refine Russian oil for the Cuban Government only to find it on the market in competition with their own products. Furthermore, they had a natural reluctance to comply with orders from a Government that refused to release millions of dollars in foreign exchange the companies needed to pay for earlier imports and was rapidly moving toward nationalization of the industry.



## Who Is Fidel Castro?

Who was Fidel Castro? The 20 Cubans, 19 men and one woman, gathered together in the conference room in Havana in January 1959 wished they knew. They were his president and his ministers, the first Government of the Cuba he had promised the people, the delirious, joyous, enchanted people whose welcome in Havana to Fidel had exceeded anything seen in liberated Europe on V-E Day.

Some of the ministers surely thought they knew who Fidel was. José Miro Cardona, the Prime Minister, for example, the brilliant jurist who had known Fidel as a law student at the university; Faustino Pérez Hernández, Minister for the Recovery of Misappropriated Assets, who had faithfully led Fidel's underground in Havana and taken very important visitors to the Sierra Maestra to see the Maximum Leader; Regino Boti León, of National Economy, the Harvard-Chilean educated economist who had gone to the mountains to help write Fidel's Charter for Cuba Libre; President Manuel Urrutia Lleo, the Santiago de Cuba judge who had protected Fidel's people after the Moncada raid; Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado, Minister for Revolutionary Laws.

There were ministers who, although they never had known Fidel, believed they knew what the young man stood for. Roberto Agramonte Pichardo, university professor, the then Foreign Minister was one of these; Elena Mederos de González, of Social Welfare, was another; as were Rufo López Fresquet and Manuel Ray Rivero, the Ministers of the Treasury and Public Works respectively, both anti-Batista men, Fresquet a lawyer-economist-professor, Ray an engineer-builder.

So they met Fidel and later, after Miro Cardona wisely conceded that none could stand before Fidel, and the Maximum Leader became what he had been in fact, the head of the Government, then they worked with Fidel, talked with him at Cabinet meetings, and sent to him the problems they couldn't solve.

But did they learn who Fidel was? Not President Urrutia, who was removed from office in July 1959 to remain since then a prisoner in his home, a frightened, despairing man; not Miro Cardona who broke with Fidel and chose to live in the United States after he had been named and accepted as Fidel's Ambassador to Washington; not Faustino Pérez, also in self-imposed exile with his family in eastern Cuba, kicked out of the Cabinet by Fidel nearly a year ago because Faustino had questioned the justice of Fidel's condemnation of a comrade for treason; not López Fresquet or Roberto Agramonte, or Manuel Ray, or Elena Mederos, all expelled from the Government

Who is Fidel? Cuba's Judas, the master dissembler, the fabulist, the traitor who masqueraded as a patriot, the youth who tricked his betters and his elders, the young idealist in a hurry, the agent of the Kremlin, the fool who is deluded by power and possessed by delusions of grandeur, the paranoid,

the pompous lazy cynic, the tool, the maniac, the genius, the greatest orator of our age, the greatest statesman of Latin America?<sup>20</sup>

To those who should know Fidel best--his closest relatives, his divorced wife, his classmates, the comrades of his turbulent youth, his associates at the bar, the people who knew him in Mexico and in the Sierra Maestra, and those who now know him in Havana--Fidel Castro Ruz is an enigma. It is not surprising that he is an enigma also to the diplomats and journalists who have dealt with him, as he is to this correspondent. If you ask me who Fidel Castro is, you must also tell me which Fidel Castro you mean.

My professional career of a quarter of a century embraces the demagoguery of Hitler and Mussolini and the oratory of Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt. In my opinion Fidel Castro would need lessons from none of them. He is one of the great masters of the spoken word. Several of Fidel's efforts, despite their exhausting length, have been technically and aesthetically perfect and as orations per se, things of beauty and of joy for an auditor who is not concerned with what Fidel says but only with how he says it.

If the Latin American scouts of the Comintern, Latin American Section, picked Fidel years ago as the man most likely to succeed in Cuba, then their boss Nikita, who has called Fidel "a great national leader," should give them a bonus. For they selected a man who knows how to talk to Latin Americans and how to use modern gadgets to reach a maximum number in the most effective way. Fidel can hold his listeners, use them, turn them upside down and inside out, to make them serve him and the cause he advocates. He may no longer be able to charm middle-class listeners as he did in his earlier speeches, but none who have watched him sway a crowd can doubt his ability.

Can he do more? What is Fidel Castro other than one of the world's most effective orators?

Fidel's career shows, as I read it, qualities of superior leadership, a magnetism that many persons have found irresistible, and a mind and a will for utilizing in his projects those people he attracts with his personality.

In 1953, when he was 26 and had nothing behind him other than his zeal his name, he led 165 poorly armed young men and two young women in a suicide

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<sup>20</sup> Fidel has been called all of these things by people who have known him. I have heard him called "the greatest statesman of our age" by an experienced observer who was with Fidel in the Sierra Maestra for several months. And I know another veteran observer who has called Fidel "a young idealist." You need be in Cuba only a short time to hear many of the other less complimentary names applied to the Maximum Leader.

raid on the barracks in Santiago de Cuba, where at least a thousand armed, trained men and officers awaited them with automatic arms, machine guns, mortars, bazookas, and tanks.

Among Fidel's followers were a young physician and lawyers, accountants, and engineers. These educated Cubans were not easily seduced into risking their lives for a lawyer about their own age, with no combat record worth mentioning, and with a doubtful plan. Yet they faithfully followed Fidel to defeat. Those who survived to serve with him in prison continued to follow him until he finally had his victory and became Cuba's Maximum Leader; then some who had been with him left him, to be replaced by others. Those who had the experience of serving under Fidel looked up to him though they might be twice his age; they feared him; they believed in him long after their eyes and ears told them where Cuba was heading under his direction.

Fidel Castro also has some of the attitudes unfortunately too often associated with qualities that make for leadership. During a Cabinet discussion of the grave problem of Cuba's urban juvenile delinquents the comment was made that the state youth camps Fidel proposed would deprive the youths of training in the responsible leadership the republic would need; that it has been found best in other countries to set up a system of foster-parent homes for such youngsters.

His reply was that he couldn't see why Cuba would need citizens with "leadership qualities." What Cuba needed, he said, was better-trained mechanics and farmers. "The nation requires only one good leader," he is quoted as saying, "and that's enough. The rest will follow him, as they should."<sup>21</sup>

On another occasion he is reported to have discussed the danger of his assassination. "I know it can happen," he is said to have remarked to a diplomat. "It is a danger we all take. Caesar was stabbed to death and Lincoln was shot." No smile was visible, I was told, as Fidel linked himself to these immortals.

Fidel is not joking when he talks of would be assassins. "You can't endanger the established order in the United States and expect Wall Street to fold its hands," he said on one occasion at a public gathering. Paranoid or not, Fidel has the anxieties of a man whose mission it is to destroy powerful forces outside Cuba, a man with a universal mission.

It is related that once before boarding an airplane Fidel cross-examined the pilot about the flames and smoke he had seen coming from the plane's exhaust. It took a long time to convince him there was no plot to kill him.

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<sup>21</sup> My informant, who remains in Cuba and cannot be named, was present at this discussion.

In the mountains, Fidel seldom was seen without his rifle which had a telescopic sight. Indications are that not often did he expose himself to the enemy. Raul, Guevara, Camilo Cienfuegos, Hubert Matos, and others led the riading columns and in the last week of action the rebel advancing forces. Fidel kept himself busy in those weeks planning an attack on Santiago de Cuba which was never made. Even while the Castro brothers were in Mexico preparing to return to Cuba, an eyewitness related, Raul "was out in front and Fidel stayed a little behind." Perhaps Fidel is a physical coward but more likely he is saving himself for his high destiny.

As a student of law in Havana he certainly didn't seem cowardly. In 1947 he left school to volunteer for an invasion of the Dominican Republic then being financed and armed in Cuba. The Cuban Government eventually intervened before the invaders could take off but Fidel apparently was ready and willing to risk his life to try to rid the Caribbean of Generalissimo Rafael Trujillo Molina, who never has been lenient with his enemies.

Again in the same year, Fidel went as a student delegate to a Leftist gathering in Bogotá, Colombia, where he found himself in the midst of a bloody revolution caused by the assassination of José Eliecer Gaitan, the idol of the Colombian Left. His precise actions at that time are in doubt. In the end he sought and received protection from the Cuban Ambassador and was flown back to Havana. The Communists may have engineered the assassination and the rioting to break up a meeting of the Organization of American States in Bogotá, attended by the then Secretary of State, George C. Marshall. It is believed the Communists sponsored the students' gathering too and some think that Fidel was selected a Cuban delegate by Communist students at the university. But none of this can be proved.

A matter of record, however, is Castro's marriage and his immediate subsequent activities. He was married on October 12, 1948, to Mirtha Díaz Balart, whose father and brother became not insignificant functionaries and beneficiaries of the government of Fulgencio Batista. In September 1949, the young couple had a son, Fidel or Fidelito as he is called. Fidel's wife divorced him after Batista released him from prison but she had separated from him two years before, after the 1953 Moncada raid. The son has remained with his mother except for brief and well-publicized interludes with his father, as when he shared Fidel's moment of triumph in January 1959 in Havana.

Something is known of Fidel's life during the four and a half years that he lived with Mirtha. The law practice he started drew clients who could not afford more experienced counsel. The young Castros needed some help from their parents to make ends meet. Fidel during this period became increasingly unhappy about the state of Cuban affairs.

Batista took the island in 1952 in the month of March, a year and four months before Fidel tried to take the Moncada Barracks and three-and-a-half

years after Fidel's marriage to Mirtha. During those three-and-a-half years the Cubans had a constitutional government under the presidency of Carlos Prio y Socarras, who later gave such useful financial backing to Fidel that in mid-1960 he still kept his fortune while remaining in Havana, where he shared public platforms with Fidel.

Yet it was during Prio's presidency that Fidel became a rebel. And what he was rebelling against was the shameless corruption of President Prio, who with no show of resistance and in full possession of the millions he had grafted between 1948 and 1952, handed Cuba over to Batista and his military conspirators.

The leader of the rebellious movement in Prio's time--and it was a political not a military movement--was Eduardo Chibas, who probably was Cuba's most popular radio personality before Fidel took over. "Eddy" Chibas, who is said to have been Fidel's mentor, took himself and his campaign against Prio's corruption so seriously he shot himself in a radio studio at the end of his Sunday night broadcast on August 5, 1950. He died a fortnight later.

Eddy Chibas, who had founded the Cuban People's Party, called the Ortodoxos, was its unsuccessful Presidential candidate in 1948, losing to Prio. Fidel had joined the Ortodoxos and in 1952 was one of the party's candidates for congress. The election was not held because two months before the scheduled date Batista seized control of Cuba. He had campaigned for the presidency but turned from ballots to guns when it became apparent that the vote would go to the same Roberto Agramonte who later was to serve for a time as Fidel's Foreign Minister. Running on the Ortodoxos ticket, Agramonte had become known as the "stand-in for the ghost of Eddy Chibas."

Fidel, then, had been for several years a not very unusual rebel, an insignificant follower of Eddy Chibas, one of the most respected men then in Cuba, and of Professor Agramonte, who was with the philosophy faculty of the university in Havana. Fidel was a respectable liberal Ortodoxo, opposed to corruption and in favor of moderate reform.

When in March 1952 Batista shocked Cuba with a golpe del estado, Fidel, along with thousands of Cubans, denounced Batista for his perfidy. Fidel, the lawyer, sought to have Batista declared an imposter by the courts. But it is well established in Cuban law that revolutions make their own law, as Fidel acknowledged when he conducted his own defense in Santiago de Cuba in 1953. His petition was rejected.

Not long after that, Fidel started to gather young people around him to plot the attack on Moncada. No other Cubans reacted so strongly to Batista's crime. And the question is: why did Fidel become the planner and leader of such a desperate action in the 16 months after Batista seized Cuba? What changed him from an Ortodoxo congressional candidate, from a politically

ambitious lawyer with a middle class family and well-to-do relatives, into an all-or-nothing violent revolutionary?

He was 24 years old when Batista's coup took place; he had been married since he was 21. A month before his 26th birthday he left his wife and son, his law practice, and the Ortodoxos to become the leader of 167 youthful revolutionaries charging at dawn into a barracks containing a thousand well-armed soldiers. Why?

It is said that he hated tyranny so much and loved freedom so dearly he gladly risked his life and fortune to unseat Batista. Maybe. It is said also that upon finding the gates to a political career abruptly closed and locked by Batista's military dictatorship, Fidel became so frustrated he was willing to risk the Moncada attack in a desperate move to reopen the gates to his abiding ambitions. Maybe.

It is said that Mirtha knows why her husband chose to storm Moncada. And perhaps she does. Or perhaps the psychoanalysts who were consulted by Fidel six years later can supply this key to the mysterious transformation of a Havana lawyer into the firebrand of Cuba and the Caribbean. Whatever the motivation, Fidel Castro Ruz, from mid-1953 dedicated his considerable talents to the revolutionary trade with substantial success.

Perhaps his years of marriage to Mirtha, his law practice, and his mild political activities, were the strange interlude for Fidel. Perhaps more in character were the violent campaigns of his university days, his earlier career as the "big wheel" on campus of each school he attended, his enlistment to invade the Dominican Republic, his presence for a revolt in Colombia, the raid on Moncada, the courtroom defense, the prison on the Isle of Pines, the exile in Mexico, the return to Cuba, the Sierra Maestra and the glorious victory of 1959.

I'm inclined toward the judgment that Fidel Castro Ruz could not bear a life deprived of glory and power; that he was impelled by forces within him to take the heroic and ghastly course he pursued; that once he comprehended his helplessness, sought in vain for a remedy; and that finally, he has been convinced that what he took to be wrong is right, that his dreams are reality, that his cause is righteous and his triumph certain.

### The Why of Castro Cuba

I have tried to describe the Cuba Fidel created, the many sides of Fidel the creator, and the methods employed in creating his Cuba. This final section deals with the men and forces released by the Cuban Revolution and the inducements, incitements, and pressures which made Fidel of Cuba a mouthpiece for a Communist-inspired clique.

It is related in Cuba that after Ernesto "Che" Guevara had been given his first opportunity to address the people by radio and television he was promptly dispatched by Fidel on an official tour of the Communist and neutralist capitals of Europe. For during his first formal appearance on the island network, Guevara had described in his disarming, quiet, gentle fashion, the Cuba he foresaw, the Cuba he said Fidel was going to create. While he did not say so directly, this Cuba of the future would patently be an undesirable alien in the Western Hemisphere so long as that part of the globe subscribed to the same principles and policies as the United States.

There were to be, for example, in the Cuba of the future with its government-planned economy, no owner-managed private enterprises excepting only those that were small and engaged in activities of no real importance to the economy. The capital for the many projected new industries and an expanding diversified agriculture in the new Cuba could come from private investors but only from those willing to submit to government management, since the Government would hold at least a 51 per cent share in such enterprises.

A regime with a long and honorable record in dealing with invested capital could anticipate some response to such an invitation, possibly from international bankers, private and governmental, or from Western European groups. But Castro Cuba was brand new and in the hands of untried, untested barbudos such as Guevara himself, whose personal record in Argentina and Guatemala was not exactly attractive to investors.

It was obvious, then, that Guevara in his broadcast did the opposite of what any Cuban would do if he really wanted to attract Western capital. And also he did the opposite of what any Cuban would do if he wanted to encourage managers and owners of established properties in Cuba to invest more funds in the island, to enlarge and improve production, to risk capital in new enterprises.

Guevara was proclaiming policies destined to bring to Cuba, nationalization, collectivization, and membership in the Communist bloc. He was doing it at a time when the payment of high taxes by investors, managers, businessmen, and property owners was essential to Cuba's solvency, when new investment from abroad was sorely needed, and when a return to normalcy in the conduct of the economy by those United States and Cuban companies who dominated it was required if Cuba was to receive from exports the hundreds of millions of dollars it must have to pay for the imports it needed to live.

Guevara seemed to be trying to create a panic and a breakdown. As a reassurance to those he had alarmed, therefore, he was sent abroad for several months. Many assumed he would stay abroad, but he returned to Fidel's side as the Revolution's first summer or dead season came to a climax and after someone had reminded Fidel that to spend one must receive.

An experienced, high-ranking, diplomat (not representing the United States), who was in Havana at that time (August-September 1959) has described what in his view happened as Fidel and Guevara, his close friend and confidant, sat down to consider where they were and where they should go:<sup>22</sup>

"Fidel for the first time since Batista's flight really was worried. He had lost none of his confidence in himself but he wasn't so sure about his associates. Could he go ahead at full steam as he had been doing, with new roads, new buildings, people's stores, beaches, model villages, pig cities, peanut paradises, fertilizer plants, schools, motels, swimming pools, youth hostels, hospitals, armaments for his glorious barbudos, and new homes for the surprised and delighted guajiros he had adopted as favored sons of the Revolution? Where would the money come from?

"Batista had left even less cash than Fidel had admitted. The taxpayers' response had been most gratifying, the sugar had been sold (in less quantity than usual because of the rebellion), but the expenses had been terrifying and the deficits of the co-operatives shocking. Could he continue to spend freely in the months ahead?

"Guevara reassured Fidel. There was no insurmountable difficulty. Fidel could go ahead with his pet projects, the money would be found. Guevara would find it.

"The solution offered to Fidel in this, his first serious encounter with the economic dislocation resulting from his Revolution, was simple and direct: let Guevara do it! It appealed to Fidel. He could retain his checkbook and the banking account with the bottomless balance and Guevara would save the Revolution from insolvency and Fidel from embarrassment."

Fidel moved by compelling inner desires for the role Guevara offered him, walked into trap number one. He let Guevara do it. Instead of another trip abroad, the Argentinian received a key job in INRA and then the key jobs of National Bank President, chief planner, and INRA policymaker. Within months he became the economic czar of Cuba.

Guevara's chief allies within the regime were Fidel's brother Raul, his wife, Vilma, her sister, Nilsa, Nilsa's husband, Rolando Díaz Aztarain, and their protégés and stooges. There was no need to influence INRA director Antonio Nuñez Jiménez. He agreed with Guevara that a collectivized Cuba managed by an elite under the general direction and protection of the Moscow-Peking axis would be as near to heaven as the Pearl of the Antilles could be brought.

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<sup>22</sup> This diplomat was one of the few who came to know Ernesto Guevara quite well. The account related here is put together from numerous conversations.



This self-selected elite headed by Guevara has manipulated both the Revolution and Fidel, bribing, suborning, enticing, cajoling, persuading, threatening, killing, and imprisoning, as they move toward their goal.

The next step was inevitable. How else could Fidel be supplied with the money, the material goods, and the devoted collaborators he demanded but by widespread seizures of wealth and properties in existing good condition and by the removal of those revolutionaries who naïvely believed the Agrarian Reform Law meant what it said?

The managing director of one of the oldest and largest financial institutions in Cuba related his concept of how step number two was accomplished, as Guevara used the economic and political tools available to him in order to supply Fidel with the wherewithal for his dream world:

"He already had set up a very strict system for reducing the imports of goods and the export of dollars, and of course the removal from Cuba of all manner of capital goods was under control. Also prices had been fixed for food staples, and rents had been reduced and stabilized by law. Other rates, such as for electricity, cooking gas, and telephone service, were cut and controlled firmly. He imposed stern limitations on the granting of new loans by banks. No other source of capital was available outside the Government itself. And heavy taxes, rigorously collected, took care of profits and the accumulation of capital in private hands.

"This is the base upon which Guevara, who seems to have excellent advisers, has operated his deficit-financed economy. He has done very well up to mid-1960. Inflation has been small and while the Cuban peso in the unfriendly American market and under distress sale pressures is steadily losing ground, its purchasing power inside Cuba is not. It is surprising how much the peso still can buy if you stay in the ordinary market place; the prices of certain goods desirable as a hidden means for exporting capital--diamonds, Paris gowns, furs, jewelry, etc.--have gone up in pace with the sinking international value of the peso. But most Cubans are unaffected by this and their pesos, which many are hoarding, continue to be worth about as much in their market places as before Guevara took over.

"Guevara had demonstrated his ability to furnish Fidel with the currency needed for his extravagant Revolution without setting off a disastrous inflationary spiral. This demonstration was absolutely essential if Fidel was to continue to give Guevara the free hand he wanted for other purposes.

"These were, first, far-reaching nationalization of urban and rural enterprises not actually affected by revolutionary laws; second, the destruction of the labor unions to remove all danger of strikes for higher wages and to make a wage freeze possible; third, state ownership and control of Cuba's sugar, oil, textile, and shoe production, and other "major" industries; fourth, such con-

trol over Cuban foreign trade as may be needed to make a shift from the dollar to the ruble bloc.

"Guevara accomplished his goals with great speed by using well-trying methods.

"First, he explained to Fidel that while it was possible to supply a certain amount of the cash he needed by printing currency, huge amounts had to be found in another way. What was easier or more natural than to seize the wealth available in Cuba in the form of successful breeding ranches, rice and sugar plantations, vegetable and fruit farms, operating shoe factories, chemical and textile plants, etc., etc.?

"The idea must have appealed to Fidel. The Revolution could live off the country as his rebels had. There was plenty of Cuban fat. Inventories were fairly high. And the money Fidel was pumping into the country through his hundreds of projects had kept demand high.

"Second, it was explained to Fidel that the labor unions under their old leaders would menace the Revolution with demands and strikes for higher and higher wages bringing higher and higher prices. Were not the workers expected to be loyal revolutionaries seeking the same goals as Fidel? Then let them be satisfied with lower salaries, frozen wage levels, payment in kind at the people's stores, labor unions run by and for the Government. Fidel agreed and made the required speeches. Could he have refused and jeopardized his plans by risking an inflationary spiral? Of course not.

"When Mikoyan offered to trade oil for sugar, could Fidel refuse? Of course not. And when the refineries refused to handle the Russian oil, didn't he have to seize them? Naturally. And when the American quota for Cuban sugar was reduced, could Fidel reject Red China's trade-recognition deal? You know the answer.

"From step to step he went along. When Roland Díaz was given the treasury post as a reward for seizing so many "misappropriated" properties could Fidel object? After discovering how much he needed the Communists could he let anyone offend them? You know he couldn't.

"He had turned against his middle-class backers, who were more responsible for his victory than any other group in Cuba, because they questioned the soundness of the grandiose reforms he insisted should be undertaken simultaneously regardless of cost. When they proved to be right, Guevara came to the rescue, fresh from Communist Europe with promises and plans in his pocket. What Guevara did seemed necessary to Fidel and in the end he found himself talking and thinking like Guevara with the approval of Nikita Khrushchev and Mao Tse-tung."

Given the man Fidel and the Revolution he sired, could any other kind of Castro Cuba have been created? An academic question, perhaps, in mid-1960 for the Cubans.

But Fidel of Cuba could have his successors and imitators. There may always be a Guevara but is it necessary that he should always triumph? I think not.

Not much is known about Guevara's background. I have been told by diplomats who knew his family that his paternal grandparents came to Argentina from the United States; that his father long ago separated from his mother (who has come to Havana to live) and that he has an abiding hatred for his father and the United States from whence his father's parents came.

Guevara left Perón's Argentina and later turned up in Guatemala where he held a minor job under the then pro-Communist regime. When that government was overthrown, he fled to Mexico City. It was there Fidel and Guevara met. Fidel, in exile, was plotting the return to Cuba that eventually resulted in Batista's departure. Guevara accompanied Fidel to Cuba and has been close to him ever since. In the mountains Guevara was a kind of political commissar, a chief indoctrinator of the Fidelistas who needed indoctrination to become the kind of revolutionaries Guevara wanted.

There is abundant evidence of his success. He left behind him, as the rebels advanced, individual or groups of revolutionaries who had won his confidence. In nearly every instance they were Communists or obedient to Communist superiors. The first provincial delegate (governor) of Las Villas Province installed by Guevara, who directed the conquest of Santa Clara, the provincial capital, was a Communist. (A Negro Cuban, he was a failure as governor and resigned quickly under pressure from the local populace.)

There remains the question of whether Fidel would have found it possible to take an alternative course, in opposition to Guevara. Were there men and forces released by the Revolution that might have taken Fidel, and Cuba with him, down another path?

There were. A great majority of the men and women in Fidel's armed forces, nearly all of them in his first Cabinet were non-Communists, if not anti-Communists. The same may be said of Fidel's backers in the United States and Latin America.

The principal social and economic aspirations of the majority subscribing to Fidel's movement at the moment of victory were, or should have been, completely acceptable to the United States and to nearly all the governments of Latin America.

There was, therefore, a combination of men and of forces early in 1959

which should have produced the kind of Cuba the Hemisphere could welcome, the kind most politically-minded Cubans expected, the kind the United States Department of State seemed willing to support.

It would have been a totally new Cuba. Its government would have been honest; its economy would have been broadened and released from bondage to King Sugar; the oppressed one-third of its people would have been given a new hope and the means for realizing it, and its rich one-tenth would have been deprived of much power and wealth. It would have been a moral, clean, and healthy Cuba, inviting assistance and investment from a Western world willing to make such offers, as in truth it was.

Why didn't Fidel Castro opt for such a Cuba? The record is a tragic story of opportunities ignored.

### History and the Man

After Jean-Paul Sartre had been escorted around Castro's Cuba in the early spring of 1960 he reported finding no signs of a revolutionary plan, no imported ideologies, no Marxian mastermind behind Fidel Castro.

"These Cubans," he said, "are improvisers de luxe."

Since Sartre was in favor of the Revolution he stressed its goals rather than its means. The latter obviously appeared to the Frenchman to be a kind of Latin American madness.

Fidel, he declared, was a pragmatic humanist who pursued a new and better life for his people by employing whatever and whomever he might find useful, wherever and whenever he needed them. His eyes were fixed on his goal but his mind was wide open to all suggestions from any collaborators on how to reach it. Fidel was a dedicated revolutionary reformer who played by ear; there was no score before him, no other maestro behind the podium. So said Sartre.

Less sympathetic observers, looking at the same conditions, saw chaos. "Cuba is drunk," a Mexican correspondent said in July. "They do not know what they are doing." In the same month a Czech observed: "What the Cubans need is organization and efficiency." And Vladimir Piskacek who was attending the Youth Congress in Cuba added: "There is only madness here."

"I can't make heads or tails of this," was the comment of James E. Ryan of Buffalo, New York, also at the Youth Congress. And Piskacek chimed in: "It is only some kind of crazy game. I have seen Communist revolutions and this is not a Communist revolution."

In the same month, July 1960, Havana was host to a meeting of international lawyers and law professors, five of the latter were from the United States. They were given the usual VIP treatment: trips to a showcase co-operative and discussions with able propagandists of the regime. And what was the reaction of the American professors?

"It's the same old story," one of them told me, speaking he said for his colleagues. "Each step they take here can be predicted; they were taken in Czechoslovakia when the Stalinists converted that Western-minded democracy into a Communist satellite."

Was Fidel a misguided humanist? "Are you crazy?" was the response. "Fidel may be a chaotic individual, he even could be exploited by those around him. But the society he is constructing in Cuba will have as much humanism in it as a Siberian slave camp or one of Mao Tse-tung's human ant hills. And its construction is about as unplanned as a session of the Soviet parliament."

What about the new schools and hospitals for the poor? The widespread housing program? The homes for peasants on the co-operatives? The new beaches and roads, the barracks turned into student cities?

"Admirable in motive, however inefficiently or inadequately implemented," he replied. "And you can find many of the same projects in Franco Spain and Khrushchev's Russia. Humanism? Hardly. You can't install a totalitarian state in Cuba without winning over some of the people some of the time."

A noted Cuban historian whom I questioned recently, agreed: "They have moved carefully according to a master plan, step by step. In destroying scholarly freedom and in converting this institution of learning (the university in Havana) into a government branch for the political indoctrination of students, they have followed a plan. The university is in the hands of a student directorate of Castro appointees; the purge of the faculty and student body, carried out by force, is complete. Communists dominate faculty and students and Fidel planned it that way."

Step-by-step, according to plan or improvised humanism, unorganized madness? The essential question may be: was it planned by Fidel, coldly and cynically in advance; or is Fidel, like the Sorcerer's apprentice, inextricably enmeshed in forces he innocently released and can't control?

The historian will have time to wrestle with the question. Now, while it is unanswered and the controlling facts are hidden or blurred, it may not help the historian much, or greatly satisfy the reader, to record this observer's suggestion: that Fidel Castro and the Revolution he created are humanist, impractical and dogmatic, and collectivist; that Fidel is an unstable person who has been hoodwinked and a skillful dissembler; that he is a creature of forces

he can't control and possibly can't comprehend, and the creator of an epoch; that he is not an "either-or" person.

While Fidel awaited in the Sierra Maestra for Batista's political suicide, he was taken one day to the hut of a Negro Cuban family where a child had died of intestinal parasites, the killer of the Cuban countryside. Fidel stared at the little swollen body, at the illiterate parents, at the sickly brothers and sisters. A high school teacher who witnessed the scene described it for me:

"Fidel turned to the group who came with him. His face was covered with sweat, he was wearing glasses and they were blurred with moisture. He spoke slowly and so softly I had to move nearer to hear him. 'I'll build a hospital right here,' he was saying, 'and a school, and a library and some decent houses. No Cuban should live like this.'"

"He didn't forget it," the teacher said. "He gave Dr. René Vallejo two million pesos to build what he had promised these people." Vallejo, Fidel's INRA chief in Oriente Province, has related how Fidel came to him in the first months of his victory:

"He took out his messy checkbook of the Banco Continental Cubano and, resting his arm on the fender of his jeep, started to write a check. 'What will you need?' he asked, 'A million?' I didn't know what to say. I really had no idea of the costs. 'Two million?' Fidel asked. And without waiting for a reply, he wrote a check for two million pesos and handed it to me. 'This should get you started,' he said."

Fidel returned in a few weeks to visit Vallejo. "Have you spent that money?" he asked. Vallejo said he still had the check in his desk. "Spend it, man, spend it," Fidel told him. "That's what it is for." Vallejo spent it to build state hospitals and schools in the isolated mountains of eastern Cuba.

Practical? Of course not. These are among the activities which moved the Mexican correspondent to call the Cubans "drunk" and the Czech to speak of "madness . . . a crazy game." But to the school teacher they made Fidel a great humanist and her eyes shine with tears of gratefulness as she tells of her latest students who are the beneficiaries of his humanity.

And yet when Fidel was told by another lady, another great humanist who has given away a personal fortune, that state institutions like Vallejo's breed unthinking citizens unsuitable for a democratic society, what was Fidel's response? That in Cuba, one leader was enough. With all his devotion and determination Fidel financed these state schools and camps to train "mechanics and farmers," to teach them the doctrine that service to the state is the highest calling of man.

Is Fidel an impractical humanist? There are scores of projects in

inaccessible places in Cuba, too grandiose for their beneficiaries, too expensive, very wasteful, perhaps nearly useless. But all are dedicated to the happiness, health, and welfare of Cubans. They are projects that are Fidel's brain-children, paid for out of that famous bank account, surely a unique chapter in government financing. An audit of Fidel's account could depict him as a genius in squandering millions, without personal gain but for humanitarian goals.

Is he a dogmatic collectivist? There are hundreds of Fidelist "theologians" in the countryside, collectivists all, haranguing the peasants, instructing the youth, shouting and persuading at rallies and parades, rewriting history, instilling class hatreds--all in the name of Fidel Castro and his "humanist" Revolution "without an ideology."

There are thousands in his prisons solely because they could not remain silent while their countrymen were initiated into the dogmatism of Fidel's ideology; there are thousands more in exile for the same reason; and for the same reason a free press is dead; an autonomous university is throttled into conformity; and Fidel's bully boys roam Havana streets with iron rods of conviction for those Cubans who wish to pursue another faith.

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It is perhaps the final tragedy and the last word to be said about Fidel of Cuba, that he was a young man with old ideas. Iron rods for the people and prison for the opposition predate the Pharaohs. What is there new in a vassal state seeking a new master? Or in a kolkhoz?

The tragedy is his and Cuba's but it also is the West's. For Fidel Castro is a gifted son of the Western world who has failed it.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Irving Berlin". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.