

Preface

One can begin to understand the impact of the most fundamental revolution in modern Latin American history by objectively analyzing the words of the man who guided it. This volume encompasses Fidel Castro's chief statements from the late 1940s to the time when Fulgencio Batista finally ended his control over Cuba's destiny in the early hours of January 1, 1959. Included are letters, articles, manifestos, speeches, military and political field orders, interviews, press releases, proclamations, appointments, and decrees.

Through these selections every facet of Castro's central role as the leader of a revolutionary process can be ascertained to form a clear picture of one of the most dynamic revolutions of all time. Nonetheless, it would have been a mistake for us as editors to have been concerned solely with Castro's statements without placing them in the correct historicopolitical context. Therefore, we have written an unusually long introduction. Fidel Castro's political career and the subsequent revolutionary upheaval in Cuba have been marked by such differences of views that we felt only a thorough discussion could provide the right context for understanding the readings.

Basically, the introduction seeks to show that in Cuba there has always existed a revolutionary tradition that is anti-imperialist, nationalist, usually devoid of a systematic ideology, and above all action oriented. Moreover, almost all Cubans in the twentieth century have sought ideological guidance from José Martí, who dealt with problems in the nineteenth century similar to those of the twentieth century.

The 1933 revolutionary movement, as we shall show, degenerated into gangsterlike action groups by the 1940s. It was in one of these groups that Fidel Castro initiated his career and received practical political training. It can be said that he did not depart from Cuba's revolutionary tradition. He relied on Martí's interpretations, he was anti-imperialist and nationalist, and above all he was a man of action.

The insurrectionary process (1952-1958) was not only a struggle against the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista but also a struggle among revolutionary leaders and their organizations for control of the whole movement. In most cases the participants in the revolutionary process were men propelled by altruism, patriotism, and a thirst for political power.

It is in the 1950s that Fidel emerges as a brilliant political strategist, military tactician, and psychologist who captures the moods of his people. He displays that resourcefulness and imagination without which a revolutionary is doomed. Perhaps for that reason the selections in this volume, which are full texts of the Spanish originals, are mainly political and military statements that present the man as an astute politician rather than an ideologue. Fidel was concerned more with strategy and tactics than with theory.

We hope that this volume will contribute toward a more rational understanding of Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution. A comprehensive bibliography of Castro's works through 1958 has been included as a tool for research.

Prior to 1952, writings by Fidel Castro are sketchy and hard to find. In the early 1940s, Fidel was a university leader and participated in a political group called Unión Insurreccional Revolucionaria, but most of his speeches were neither transcribed nor recorded. In 1950–1951, he traveled throughout Cuba speaking on behalf of the Partido del Pueblo Cubano. Copies of the speeches were kept, but we have been unable to consult them because many were published in the Havana newspapers *Alerta* and *La Calle*, neither of which can be obtained in the United States.

The selections of 1952–1958 are comprehensive, although we cannot claim definitiveness for them. There are many documents written by Fidel Castro that the Cuban government has failed to publish. Furthermore, there are Cuban exiles who possess important letters from Castro but refuse to make them available to scholars.

Finally, we are aware that the work of those who write on contemporary historical events is always inconclusive. This is so because later previously classified official documents are opened, memoirs are written by participants to shed new insights into specific events, and new material becomes available. Furthermore, it is difficult to obtain necessary sources in the United States or to travel to Cuba. The difficulties are compounded by those who, wanting to keep their "heroes" shrouded in myth and legend, sometimes do not hesitate to threaten those who seek out the facts. Therefore we cannot claim this to be a definitive work, and the reader will observe in the text certain gaps that, in our opinion, still exist. The views expressed are our own, and the research and writing were not financed by any institution but rather through our own meager resources.

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