

**A STUDY OF FIDEL CASTRO: MOTIVES BEHIND THE CUBAN
REVLUTIONARY**

Honors Thesis

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Abstract:

Fidel Castro was dictator of Cuba during the years of 1959 up until 2008. He took power after the Cuban Revolution. He is a complicated character in history at best, with most of the world having differing views about his leadership style and political agenda. The great majority opinion of the former Cuban dictator in the United States is one that is unfavorable and negative, often placing Castro in a harsh category that has held the names of Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini.

Yet outside of the United States view point, Castro has been given praise for being a strong, positive, and indeed beneficial leader to Cuba. A majority of those citizens in Cuba during the revolution supported Castro in his rise to control and power. He has been seen as a savior in their country, freeing them from the former leader Fulgencio Batista. Across the world, he has become a hero and inspiration for many of the poor through his revolution and reform in Cuba.

These variations in opinion of Fidel Castro prompted a question to explore what his true intentions were for his country of Cuba and its people. What were his motives for the revolution, which may influence whether he deserves the praise or the criticism which he has been granted to him for many years across the world. What did Castro hope to gain through the Cuban Revolution and did he achieve what he set out to accomplish through his leadership and power? Were his motivations for gaining complete control of his country? Were they for beneficial reasons, or did he have a more sinister agenda for taking total control? Did he see himself as a hero and champion for his people? Did he see himself as acting in the best interests of the Cuban people?

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A Study of Fidel Castro: Motives Behind the Cuban Revolutionary

Introduction

His name is a familiar one across the globe, though the reactions to his name differ quite tremendously across the range. The United States, along with a variety of other countries across the globe, hold contempt for Fidel Castro. Yet for a vast majority of Cuba's poor and working class citizens, Castro is seen as a champion and savior. Fidel Castro was dictator of Cuba for nearly half a century, 1959-2008. When the word dictator appears, whether in casual conversation or in an academic writing piece, it usually is not followed by terms of endearment. The word has become synonymous with brutality, tyranny, and oppression. Unfortunately, the past is littered with examples that would explain why such gut reactions are easy and instinctive for people to have. Yet, dictatorship is not meant to invoke such distasteful thoughts and opinions.

Beginning in 1953, the Cuban Revolution sparked a new era in the Latin American country, and the whole world was watching. Soon enough, Fidel Castro was front and center on the global stage, becoming the domineering head revolutionary in the conflict. The goal of the revolution was to overthrow the authoritarian government, led by Cuban President Fulgencio Batista. Castro and his revolutionaries fought for the freedom they believed was being denied to them due to Batista's government.

During this time period, two world super-powers were going head-to-head. The United States and the Soviet Union were in the midst of the Cold War when the revolution in Cuba exploded. With Batista's authoritarian government, being backed by the United States, a revolution in the country was an unwelcome conflict for the North American super-power, especially considering the revolution's communist leader. The Soviet Union, however, was ready to back the revolution and the revolutionaries, hoping to gain a communist ally in the western hemisphere. So with the world watching the Cold War standoff, Cuba's revolution became the stage on which Fidel Castro would

shine.

The reasons behind Castro's revolution, rise to power, and development of communism in Cuba have been studied by historians since the revolution took place. There are some historians who blame the Cuban Revolution on the United States. Samuel Farber states that the “Cuban Revolution resulted primarily from U.S. hostility.”¹ This, in turn, means Castro's desire for the revolution was not necessarily for his people, but to challenge the United States. Other historians, including Lillian Guerra believe that Castro and the Cuban Revolution were focused on breaking away from the United States-backed government during this time. The goal was for Cuba “to finally break from U.S. control.”² The idea of United States' influence on Cuba was clearly not a desirable one.

Overall, however, most historians have been found to agree on the fact that the Cuban Revolution was a success for the people of Cuba, and that the success was accomplished in large part to the leadership and intellectual prowess of Fidel Castro.³ Though they argue over who or what influenced Castro to spark this revolution, his success was for those people in Cuba who were oppressed by the government under Batista. Everyone in the world may not have benefited from the revolution, but “the revolutionary program of Fidel Castro responded to the supreme needs of the Cuban people,”⁴ and that seems to be a point on which most historians can agree.

Historians do not all agree, however, on Castro's role in communism, or more accurately, when he became a communist and why he wanted that economic and political strategy for Cuba and its people. Many historians tend to believe that Castro was heavily influenced by the Soviet Union and was pushed into the communist direction due to this influence. After all, the Soviet Union and Castro

1 Samuel Farber, *The Origins of the Cuban Revolution Reconsidered* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 4.

2 Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959-1971* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 2.

3 Marifeli Perez-Stable, Maurice Halperin, Richard Fagen.

4 Joseph F. Thorning, “Castro's Cuba: An Inventory,” *World Affairs* 122, no. 4 (Winter 1959): 115, accessed October 5, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/20669765>.

were both seeking a strong ally to combat the United States, and they found this in each other. In order to strengthen their alliance, Castro made the strategic move of bringing communism to Cuba. Both Carlos A. Montaner and Rafeal A. Lecuona heavily agree that Castro turned Cuba into a communist state in large part due to the Soviet Union. Montaner believes that Castro was inspired by the Soviet Union and his intention was “to create a communist dictatorship copied from the Soviet model.”⁵ While Lecuona writes that Soviet Union was more forcible in their influence, saying that “Castro’s political views and behavior ... have totally subordinated the people of Cuba to the ultimate power of the Soviet Union.”⁶ They, along with many other historians, argue that Fidel Castro forced communism on the country of Cuba only because he was looking to enhance his position with the Soviet Union.⁷

Others still have different opinions, such as Farber, who insists that “communism could not have developed based on internal Cuban needs,” but instead he believes that the policies of the United States “pushed Fidel Castro and his government into the arms of the Soviet Union and communism.”⁸ While others state that Castro was always a communist, and thus nothing could have influenced him outside of his own beliefs which were already leaning towards that direction. Although they may differ on his approach, most historians give Castro credit. In large part, the revolution was a success because of Castro’s leadership. Maurice Halperin writes that “the Revolution had given hope and courage to millions of oppressed.”⁹ Castro led his people to revolution, and came out a victor and leader, but what were his motivations for doing so?

Through his own words, it is clear that Fidel Castro's ideas were not formed by external pressures, but by internal conditions within Cuba. His motivations seem to be for the best interests of

5 Carlos Alberto Montaner and Ignacio Ramonet, “The FP Debate: Was Fidel Good for Cuba,” *Foreign Policy*, no.158 (January-February 2007): 60, accessed October 5, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/25462127>.

6 Rafeal A. Lecuona, “Jose Marti and Fidel Castro,” *International Journal on World Peace* 8, no. 1 (March 1991): 57, accessed October 5, 2015, <http://jstor.org/stable/pdf/20751650>.

7 Rafeal A. Lecuona, Carlos Alberto Montaner, Leycester Coltman.

8 Farber, *The Origins of the Cuban Revolution Reconsidered*, 2-5.

9 Maurice Halperin, *The Rise and Decline of Fidel Castro: An Essay in Contemporary History* (California: University of California Press, 1973), 370.

his people and country. Although everyone is influenced to an extent by outside forces, Castro had a clear plan for Cuba that he believed would only further their success after the revolution. Evidence of this can be found in his desire and reasoning to make Cuba a communist state, in his goals for the Cuban Revolution, in his administration of power once dictator, and in his tactics and strategy in the Cold War.

I. Communism

Cuba is well known today for being a communist state, and Castro is very much the reason for this outcome. But unlike some of what the world thinks, Castro was not drawn to communism because of some outside source such as the Soviet Union, but instead, he often stressed that, “I became a Communist on my own ... I became a Communist by studying capitalist political economy.”¹⁰ He saw communism as the solution for many of Cuba's problem, and frequently, publicly, denounced all that has to do with capitalism. When he was young, he came to his own conclusion that “the capitalist economy was absurd.”¹¹ So he was determined to have nothing to do with that absurdity in his country.

Communism, according to its own advocates, is a more advanced form of socialism. Its intent is to replace private ownership and profit-based economy with that of public ownership by the state and communal control over means of production and natural resources in the economy. Castro's take on communism was heavily influenced by Marx's writing, which he was introduced to in college. Marx identified two phases of communism that would lead to the overthrow of capitalism after an inevitable struggle against classes. The first was a transitional system in which the working class would take control of the government. This he refers to as the dictatorship of the proletariat. The second phase would be a fully realized communist society, in which there would be no class divisions or

10 Fidel Castro and Barbara Walters, “An Interview With Fidel Castro,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 28 (Autumn 1977): 32, accessed September 28, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1147794>.

11 Fidel Castro and Ignacio Ramonet, *Fidel Castro: My Life: A Spoken Autobiography*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Scribner, 2006) 99.

government.¹² The revolution would carry Cuba into the first phase and eventually within a few years bring to fulfillment the second phase.

Castro grew up an educated man, and in his education, he became a Marxist-Leninist early on after reading many of the Marxist and Leninist works, and said that “Marxism taught me what society was.”¹³ As he read more and more, he became more and more involved in the ideals of Marxism-Leninism, and fought hope for the future in those ideals. These ideals included a society that would not be controlled by any higher power, but one where the people would be unified in a classless society and the production and distribution of goods would be equal. Through these Marxist and Leninist ideals, Castro saw the path to communism was through socialism, which Lenin saw as Marx's first phase. To this day, he still exclaims proudly, “I am a Socialist, a Marxist, and a Leninist – I have never stopped being those things, and never will.”¹⁴ He could never stop being those things because they are all connected to each other, and connected to the bigger picture of communism.

Castro was going to take the road to communism that best fit the country of Cuba. As Lenin was focused more on urban centers and city workers, and Mao focused on agriculture and peasant workers, Castro was prepared to blend both ideals to adapt them for his country, so to get the best possible effectiveness. He would start by focusing on agriculture, as that was the greatest part of Cuba's economy already, and his motive was to expand that economic production into one of urban centers and industrialization. His ultimate goal was still close to that of Marx's, in which Cuba would eventually become a country with no class divisions and no government that was above the people. As he states in his speech to the Cuban people, “we have only wanted to be free and live by our work. All we want is what is our own.”¹⁵

12 Marx, Karl, “Critique of the Gotha Programme,” *Die Neue Zeit* 1, no. 18 (1875): 13-30. Accessed December 3, 2015, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_Critque_of_the_Gotha_Programme.pdf.

13 Castro and Ramonet, *Fidel Castro: My Life: An Autobiography*, 100.

14 Castro and Ramonet, *Fidel Castro: My Life: An Autobiography*, 157.

15 Fidel Castro, *General Assembly on 2 September 1960*, (1960), in the Castro Speech Database, accessed October 28, 2015, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1960/19600902.html>.

Seeing as one of the goals of the Cuban Revolution was to rid the country of imperialist and capitalist ideas, Castro's motives while in power were to make sure that goal was carried out. Throughout the revolution, he argued that “the only enemy against whom we are ready to break our lances, is imperialism.”¹⁶ So to bring about the end of imperialism and capitalism, Cuba had to become a socialist state, which would eventually lead to a communist state, according to Marx. Seeing the end goal was communism, and knowing socialism was the way to bring about that society which would benefit his people, Castro believed that “communism and socialism should be constructed ... parallel with one another.”¹⁷

Castro came to firmly believe that socialism and communism would be for the best of the Cuban nation. His greatest motive was to give power back to the people. He states, “the power of the people and for the people ... it is precisely this which characterizes a socialist state.”¹⁸ He saw the way forward after the revolution was to introduce the socialist way of life, since he saw the capitalist system and imperialism as great evils that should be avoided. Out of this socialist society, a new “superior society”¹⁹ would emerge, that of a communist society. Castro thought this would be best for his people and country.

Another one of the goals of the revolution that Castro wished to enact once he got power was the greater unification of the Cuban people under a government that they could believe and trust in. Through the use of socialist and communist ideas, he believed he could achieve such a greater unity among his people. He saw his end goal as “each man and woman will see others as his brothers and sisters, and no one will see others as enemies...that is precisely the strength that socialism and communism gives to people, it is the strength of brothers as contrasted with the weakness of those who

16 Fidel Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks*, ed. Martin Kenner and James Petras (New York: Grove Press, 1969) 123.

17 Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks*, 209.

18 Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks*, 205.

19 Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks*, 209.

are divided.”²⁰ He could see the socialist and communist state bringing the people together in a way that was not possible before, and could never be possible under a capitalist society due to the need for competition.

Of course, this was an ideal that appealed to the poor and working class of Cuba, those who cheered and supported the revolution. The Cuban bourgeoisie, who were comfortable and well taken care of under Batista's regime, did not find these ideals appealing. They did not care for Castro or his revolutionary program that would introduce communism to the country. Instead, many of these Cubans fled to the United States in order to get away from Castro's new rule and his communist hopes.

Communism also helped Castro in his goal to fix the educational system in Cuba. He stated that “communism is not achieved through abundance alone but through education.”²¹ The spread of equal education would be an asset delivered by a communist and socialist society. It also would help Castro with his goals to fix the economy, as he argued that “capitalism and imperialism left us a backward agriculture.”²² Working together, Castro wanted to re-establish the economy under a communist foundation, where everyone would work harmoniously to establish a better standard of living for all in Cuba.

The hope was that introducing communism into the Cuban society would ensure that everyone was treated equally as the country improved and benefited from the revolutionary laws that Castro was putting into place. After all, according to Marx, the communist society would have no class divisions to separate the rich from the poor. As the goal was to create a more developed, a more wealthy country, Castro was to be sure that the wealth would reach everyone, and not just a few. His motives from the beginning were to bring justice to the poor and down-trod, those who were the minority and who were greatly ignored by Batista's rule. Castro promised his people that “communist conscience means that in

20 Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks*, 244.

21 Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks*, 244.

22 Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks*, 192.

the future the wealth that we create through everybody's effort should be equally shared by all.”²³ He wanted to maintain equality for all the Cuban people, and he saw communism and socialism as the best way to achieve this goal.

Transforming Cuba into a communist state was not a decision made only by Castro. The people of Cuba were ready and willing to accept this new direction, and Castro merely took their hopes and put them into action. Castro was a man for the people, and took the power they willingly gave to him. When asked how the Cuban people viewed their new roles as communists and socialists in the world, he responded with, “What made our people socialist and communists? The revolutionary laws, the work of the revolution, persuasion, and education.”²⁴ With the revolution, came communist and socialist foundations, and the people of Cuba embraced them proudly.

II. Cuban Revolution (1953-1959)

The Cuban Revolution was the first introduction of Fidel Castro, and brought his hopes for the future of Cuba to center stage. Many people, including historians and Cubans at the time, believe that Fidel Castro was the most essential reason for the success of the Cuban Revolution. He was the reason for the morale that was empowering the revolutionaries into action. He was the reason for the nationalism that flamed inside everyone in the revolution in order to achieve a more united country. With the entire revolution riding upon his shoulders, Castro exuded confidence, leadership, intelligence, and strategy. While leading all these revolutionaries, mostly the poor and mistreated Cubans, to victory, Castro had a very clear goal in mind: to win back the freedom, equality, and political power that Cubans once shared. That goal, the motives that drove his own revolutionary ambitions, were shared in the minds of all Cubans that fought alongside the revolutionary.

Castro firmly believed that the Cuban government under the control of Batista was morally

²³ Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks*, 328.

²⁴ Castro and Walters, “An Interview With Fidel Castro,” 34.

wrong. Castro himself described his impression of the government that was in place by saying, “Batista came to power by force, through a coup d'etat. He looted the country. All his acts were illegal.”²⁵ His first and foremost task was to rescue the Cuban people from this repressive and detrimental government that was already in place. He thought the only way to get rid of Batista and his corrupt rule was to bring a revolution to the country by the people. So he “decided to launch a revolutionary programme and organize a popular uprising.”²⁶ This revolutionary programme was designed to bring about a new government that would treat its people equally and not discriminate against any minorities in the population.

By popular uprising, it is clear that Castro believed the majority of the Cuban people would be behind him and support the revolution, which reinforced his motivations for starting a revolution. He states in one of his speeches that “such a people deserves a better fate, and deserves to achieve the happiness it has not had in 56 years of a Republican form of government.”²⁷ He is referring to the people of Cuba in his statement, and addressing why he believed those people would stand behind him during this revolution, spreading the idea by advocating for communism and an anti-Batista sentiment. The revolution, according to Castro, was always for the benefit of the majority, the good of the people, and with the best intentions for the country of Cuba.

In order to begin this glorified revolution against Batista's regime, Castro had to get the people behind him, and in order to start a popular uprising, he needed to loudly express his motives and goals for the revolution to the eager people of Cuba. In one of many public speeches that Castro made, he announced the task of the revolution was “to develop the country in every way, to develop the country materially and culturally.”²⁸ He emphasized that the revolution would be for everyone, and it would

25 Castro and Walters, “An Interview With Fidel Castro,” 30.

26 Castro and Ramonet, *Fidel Castro: My Life: A Spoken Autobiography*, 103.

27 Fidel Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks to Citizens of Santiago*, (1959), in the Castro Speech Database, accessed September 28, 2015, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1959/19590103.html>.

28 Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks*, 195.

carry the country to higher heights it would not be able to reach under Batista. And in order to achieve such heights, Castro laid out the two biggest opponents that the revolution would combat and correct. Castro led his troops on the promise that they “were going to fight a revolution of national liberation, an anti-imperialist revolution.”²⁹ He wanted to free the country and remove all imperialism that may lay within. The imperialism that was present in the country at the time was the presence of the United States government, which backed Batista and his regime.

National liberation is a goal for the people. Castro believed that Cuba deserved sovereignty for itself. Although Cuba was technically a sovereign nation, he was convinced that the country was under the thumb of the United States, and the imperialist nation had taken the sovereignty of Cuba. The revolution, in Castro's eyes, should focus on independence and unification within the country for the people. He states that “a revolutionary government wants to ... concentrate its efforts on solving its own problems ... carry out a program for the people.”³⁰ Every time he gets the chance, Castro stresses that the revolution was for the people and for a sense of nationalism to grow in Cuba, a sense of nationalism that had been dormant for far too many years. In accordance with a goal of national liberation, Castro says “the Revolution has sought ... to create confidence among the people and a sense of security.”³¹

Castro also made many allusions to the Cuban Revolution being an anti-imperialist revolution, an idea that stems from Lenin. The influence of the United States was heavy in Batista's regime, and that brought the threat of an imperialist ideology. Castro was a dedicated champion for anti-imperialism, and wanted the same for Cuba because he believed that the people share his sense of values against imperialism. He rallied them by saying, “our Revolution and our people stand firm against imperialist power, its political influence, its long experience in aggression, crime, subversion,

29 Castro and Ramonet, *Fidel Castro: My Life: A Spoken Autobiography*, 173.

30 Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks*, 9.

31 Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks*, 223.

and piracy.”³² It is clear by the way Castro speaks about imperialism that he saw it as only a negative concept that had no place in Cuban society after the revolution. He wanted to save his country from the imperialist mindset of the United States. This is in sync with Castro's view of sovereignty for Cuba and its people.

When it comes down to it, Castro's motives behind the revolution have to do with rescuing the Cuban people from under Batista's government because he believed it was repressing the people. He fought for the revolution to encourage “a struggle against various kinds of prejudice,”³³ and to end up in the aftermath with “a place where such injustices will be eliminated.”³⁴ These kinds of prejudices and injustices that he wanted to combat and destroy in his country refers mainly to women and homosexuals, who were greatly oppressed by the Batista regime. He also wanted to put an end to the poor-getting-poorer while the rich-get-richer. In Castro's eyes, Batista was not taking care of the poor citizens in Cuba, but only rewarding the rich. Castro saw all the Cuban people as equal, and all deserving of a better leader to take care of them.

III. Dictatorship (1959-1965)

The Cuban Revolution, in no small part due to Fidel Castro, was a major success. Batista's regime fell and a new government was put into place, but it was not set in stone who would lead this new government and who would become the lead figurehead of Cuba in this new era. The popular opinion would be that Castro would take control and power, since he had so successfully led the revolution to fruition. Yet Castro answered those opinions by stating, “I had no desire to be president – I wanted to show that I hadn't been in the struggle out of personal interest,”³⁵ and again in Santiago he reiterated to a crowd, “I am not interested in power nor do I envisage assuming it at any time. All that I

32 Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks*, 190.

33 Castro and Ramonet, *Fidel Castro: My Life: A Spoken Autobiography*, 225.

34 Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks*, 80.

35 Castro and Ramonet, *Fidel Castro: My Life: A Spoken Autobiography*, 215.

will do is to make sure that the sacrifices of so many compatriots should not be in vain.”³⁶ Castro did not immediately take power and control of Cuba. He did not have his heart set on being a dictator after the triumph of the revolution at least that is what he said publicly. Instead, he wished to stay in the background, and make sure that the new government they created would remain in place and stay loyal to the original goals of the revolution. Above all, he was “interested in the laws that the Revolution would put in place.”³⁷ These laws and goals of the revolution that he wanted to be put into place included fixing the economy and adding industrialization to the already agricultural economy. Also, the revolution was intended to give aid to the poor.

Seeing as Castro had such high expectations for the aftermath of the revolution, it is no small wonder to conclude why he did eventually take power and control in his own hands and essentially become the nation's new government. Though, during his time in power, he always made sure to surround himself with other fellow revolutionaries, to ensure that the revolution's goals, not personal goals, were achieved through the government actions and laws. Goals such as improving the economy through agricultural developments and increasing education for the poor. He referred to this new form of government as “a collective leadership,”³⁸ meaning that the leadership that would govern Cuba was one not held by just one man, but a collection of revolutionaries who still held the values and goals of that triumph near and dear to their actions going forward. Although he was labeled as a dictator, Castro was not the sole man in charge of the government, though he did have almost all the control.

Castro came to power with many ideals and duties in mind; ideals and duties that he had carried over from the revolution and planned to put into place in everyday Cuban society for his people. He learned firsthand from the brutality of Batista's regime during the revolution that he had to enact and

36 Fidel Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks to Citizens of Santiago*, (1959), in the Castro Speech Database, accessed September 28, 2015, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1959/19590103.html>.

37 Castro and Ramonet, *Fidel Castro: My Life: A Spoken Autobiography*, 215.

38 Castro and Walters, “An Interview With Fidel Castro,” 35.

maintain a new status-quo, as Castro himself put it, “a philosophy, a principle, that innocent people must not be sacrificed.”³⁹ Those guiding principles that Castro looked to put forward for the betterment of his people and his country. He sparked the revolution to bring peace and freedom to the people of Cuba, now it was time to make sure that promise was delivered. To show he would not forget what he had originally set out to accomplish, Castro addressed the Cuban people, saying “our present duty as a poor, underdeveloped country, is to make the maximum effort to rid ourselves of poverty, misery, and underdevelopment ... our principal ideal and our duty must be to help those peoples who were left behind.”⁴⁰

In order to achieve this higher ideal and raise the standard of living for all those in Cuba, Castro's goals turned to better the economic, social, and political situations that the Cuban people found themselves in. He expressed his motives to the populace in a speech in which he said, “the general assembly proclaims the following: the right to work, education, the dignity of man, civil rights for women, secure old age, artistic freedom, nationalization of monopolies, and the necessities of life.”⁴¹ In this statement, Castro was making a lot of promises to better the lives of every citizen. He was looking to aid the poor, the uneducated, the unemployed, the rights of women, the rights of elderly, and so many more. He wanted to bring freedom to his country, freedom of the arts, freedom of businesses, and the freedom of life. In order to do this, he had to fix the government policies, the economy, and the society as a whole. According to his autobiography, Castro has “devoted [my] entire life to fighting justice, oppression of every kind, to serving others, to fighting for others, to preaching and practicing solidarity.”⁴² His motives sound nice, but his executions of those ideals were what the Cuban population yearned for and depended upon.

³⁹ Castro and Ramonet, *Fidel Castro: My Life: A Spoken Autobiography*, 211.

⁴⁰ Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks*, 212.

⁴¹ Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks*, 90.

⁴² Castro and Ramonet, *Fidel Castro: My Life: An Autobiography*, 572.

The first step for Castro and the newly energized country of Cuba was fixing the economy. Castro believed fully in the agricultural economy that Cuba had been successful in for many years. His plans were to “establish agricultural cooperatives”⁴³ that would increase the productivity of the agricultural industry that was already present in the country. He executed this ideal by putting into place the Agrarian Reform Law. This law called for profit sharing among farmers while dividing unused land evenly among the farmers. This reform was a step forward in becoming a more communist state, as the goal was for economic production and distribution to be equal among all citizens.

This was also an act to increase the unity and equality that Castro wanted to spread among his people. The reform law was met with great enthusiasm by many of the Cuban people, but those high elites who had land under Batista were far from thrilled. Castro was a champion for the poor, but he was swift and harsh in taking away the privileges that Batista had granted to the rich of Cuba while in power. For this reason, many of those who were loyal to Batista fled from Cuba to the United States.

Castro also knew that agriculture could not be the only form of economic gain for the country. Heading into the latter half of the 20th century, Castro saw the need to industrialize to keep up with other powers across the globe. For the economy to grow, he knew he had to do something more, so he planned three specific goals to work toward: “cooperatives, reforestation, industrialization.”⁴⁴ The cooperatives were for agriculture, as seen by the Agrarian Reform Law. Reforestation was a goal to bring back a larger supply of natural resources for the people and businesses of Cuba. Industrialization would spring the country into the future, and help its businesses compete with foreign nations.

A very large problem that Cuba was facing that Castro wanted to combat with the revolution's new goals were the failures of the educational system and illiteracy that was apparent in the country. He stated that “our Revolution has been do dedicated to fighting illiteracy and to developing the

⁴³ Castro and Ramonet, *Fidel Castro: My Life: An Autobiography*, 242.

⁴⁴ Castro and Ramonet, *Fidel Castro: My Life: An Autobiography*, 245.

educational system.”⁴⁵ He planned to establish new schools across the country and better the education that was being taught to children. He wanted schools to be teaching all the subjects, including history, math, and science, in more depth than they had been teaching in the past. Castro believed that the youth of the country was the key to the future, and he aspired to bring to them the greatest education they could receive. His goals of increasing the literacy rate has been successful, as within just a few years Castro was able to boast that “the revolutionary government . . . has created 10,000 new schools.”⁴⁶ The revolutionary government refers to the collective leadership he put together to aid him in his total power. By fixing the education system, Castro is looking to make sure the revolutionary goals will continue to be maintained into the future.

In addition to fixing the economic and educational issues that plagued Cuba, Castro also set his sights on aiding the poor with his new power in government. His original motives in the Cuban Revolution revolved around equality, and now he had the power to make that a reality for his people. He did this by lowering rent pricing, canceling concessions administered by Batista's government, and reducing electricity rates across the country. He stressed that everyone was equal, and he wanted to give those poor families that same chance and treatment as those who were better off. His motives for being in power were to introduce a new code of ethics into the country: “total respect for the populace.”⁴⁷

His reasons for taking power were for the best of the Cuban people, as he continually stressed the idea that “the measures we have taken are truly Cuban measures, which benefit solely Cubans.”⁴⁸ Castro only ever wanted to unite the country and the people under a better government that could lead them to a better future. He believed that was the popular idea of the masses, as he stated that “our

45 Castro and Ramonet, *Fidel Castro: My Life: An Autobiography*, 307.

46 Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks*, 23.

47 Castro and Ramonet, *Fidel Castro: My Life: An Autobiography*, 214.

48 Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks*, 65.

people understood the need for unity from the first moment.”⁴⁹ In order to achieve this unity, he saw the need for a government that the people could get behind and support. So his plan was to “establish the most honorable administration”⁵⁰ for the Cuban people and to administer to their greatest needs, which before were ignored.

Castro, ever known and paraded as a reformer, wanted the power to eliminate the political terror and corruption that had plagued his country and his people under Batista's regime. He wanted to confront and combat the economic and social problems that were abundant across the land. Most of all, he wanted a government that the Cuban people deserved and would be proud of. Just a few short years after Castro took total power and enacted these ambitious goals, he was able to announce to his people, “We are proud to say that today no embassy rules our country; our country is ruled by its people.”⁵¹

IV. The Cold War (1953-1965)

Castro came to power during the intense time period of the Cold War, where the Soviet Union and the United States were in a struggle that threatened nuclear war across the entire globe. Cuba soon became entangled in the struggle, since it was seen as a growing threat to the United States due to the communist policies that were emerging since the revolution and the friendly alliance Cuba had with the Soviet Union after the success of the revolution. Now ruling as dictator of Cuba, Castro had to address this increasing global threat. One of his biggest goals was, as it was from the very beginning, to protect the people of Cuba.

The popular opinion was that Castro was a puppet of the Soviet Union and was greatly influenced by the Stalin era. However, Castro vehemently denies such accusations. He admits that “I,

⁴⁹ Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks*, 121.

⁵⁰ Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks*, 57.

⁵¹ Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks*, 6.

deep inside, was more critical of Stalin.”⁵² Stalin was the ruthless dictator the previously ruled the Soviet Union. Castro was critical of him because he saw Stalin as abusing his power. He was not a part of the Soviet Union's plans against the United States. Instead, Castro wanted to only focus his goals on protecting and preserving the new freedoms that Cuba had won after the hard-fought revolution. He promises the people of Cuba, “We are a sovereign country. We will sacrifice much to protect that sovereignty.”⁵³ While participating in this global struggle, his first priority was to defend his homeland from foreign interests, specifically the threat of imperialism from the United States once again.

Castro was prepared to fight anyone in order to see his country defended and remain independent. Against the United States or the Soviet Union, he was ready to fight, stating to the Cuban people, “We are indeed strong enough to defend ourselves because defending your own soil is something different, it is a right.”⁵⁴ After just fighting a revolution against government corruption and foreign imperialism, Castro did not want to have to deal with that again. It is not known whether the people took Castro at his word, but he encouraged them that he was fighting once again to keep the sovereignty of the country.

Castro was especially eager to defend Cuba against any intervention by the United States. He had long believed the United States government and officials had taken control of his country and influenced Batista's government behind closed curtains. He was determined to never let that happen again while he was in power and in control of the country. Castro despised the United States because he saw them as bullies who forced their imperialist attitudes upon everyone smaller and weaker than them. He wanted above all to protect Cuba from that big bully and its imperialist ideals. He expressed this idea when saying “Cuban people have a right to be free of government officials dominated by foreign

52 Castro and Ramonet, *Fidel Castro: My Life: An Autobiography*, 181.

53 Fidel Castro, *General Assembly on 2 September 1960*, (1960), in the Castro Speech Database, accessed October 28, 2015, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1960/19600902.html>.

54 Fidel Castro, *Speech on the Revolution Will Not Stop*, (1960), in the Castro Speech Database, accessed October 15, 2015, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1960/19600307.html>.

interests, of exploiting imperialists.”⁵⁵

However, Castro was also cautious with the Soviet Union. He was in an alliance with them, and aided them in combating the forces of the United States, but Castro still did not want any big brother invading Cuba. Though both Cuba and the Soviet Union were communist states, Castro's communism differed from that of the Soviet Union. With Marxist influences, Castro's motives would lead Cuba to a future with no higher government. However, the Soviet Union's Stalinist influences called for an absolute dictator that would control everything from the economy to the social aspects of the country. Castro did not want to invite that kind of communism into Cuba. Castro had said he was more critical of Stalin, and that is because he did not see Stalinism, with its emphasis on propaganda and cult leadership, as a beneficial influence to his people.⁵⁶

Cuba was involved in the Cold War, seen as an ally of the Soviet Union in order to combat the super-powered United States. However, Castro made sure to hold only the interests of the Cuban people in his actions and decisions. All the moves he made during the war period were those actions that would benefit his country. Truly, he did not care what happened in the Soviet Union or the United States. He was purely focused on preserving the revolutionary freedoms and independence that Cuba had so recently achieved.

V. Conclusion

Fidel Castro started the Cuban Revolution due to several beliefs and intentions that he was trying to make a reality for the country and people of Cuba. He saw only corruption, greed, and tyranny in the rule and leadership of Batista's regime. In order to give the Cuban people a better life and an equal chance in the world, Castro knew “a revolutionary takeover of power was necessary.”⁵⁷ With no intentions to align with the Soviet Union, and no desire for absolute power, Castro led the revolution that would drive Cubans to their freedom and encourage the world's poor and suffering that was hope for a better day. Castro wanted to give that hope to not only Cuba, but to all of Latin America.

55 Fidel Castro, *General Assembly on 2 September 1960*, (1960), in the Castro Speech Database, accessed October 28, 2015, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1960/19600902.html>.

56 Andy Blunden, *Stalinism: Its Origins and Future* (Marxists Internet Archive, 1993), accessed December 3, 2015, <https://www.marxists.org/subject/stalinism/origins-future/index.htm>.

57 Castro and Ramonet, *Fidel Castro: My Life: An Autobiography*, 103.

Due in large part to Castro's leadership and strategy, the Cuban Revolution was a triumph, and Batista's regime was fallen. With the consent of his people, Castro took power in order to achieve the goals of the revolution. His motives were clear when taking control. He wanted to bring sovereignty back to Cuba; Castro believed the United States, a huge capitalist and imperialist power, had taken back seat control in Batista's government, and he was determined to get the imperialist influence far away from Cuban lands. He wanted to fix the economy by creating a better agricultural system along with introducing industrialization to help make them a global economy as well. He wanted to end the political corruption that Batista had left behind. But most of all, his greatest motive was to eliminate the inequality and poverty that ran through his country. Castro was intent on giving the minorities the rights they should have had a long time ago, and giving equal opportunity to the poor of the country who had been stepped on for too many years under Batista.

Castro soon came to realize that his goals of unity, anti-imperialism, equality, and even communism were ideals that had been engrained in him from his youth, when he read Marxist and Leninist material. His “ideas were Socialist,”⁵⁸ and that was how he was going to save his country. Through socialism he could reach communism, and he could eliminate the need for competition and create a stronger unification among the Cuban people. He had a vision of a communist society that would introduce a new socialist man, one who had equal opportunity and a greater social and economic standard. The Cuban people followed his ideals, and embraced socialism and communism warmly, because they, too, saw the benefit it would yield to their population.

From the beginning of the Cuban Revolution and throughout his years in power, Castro's motives have not swayed. He wanted to the best for his country and people, he wanted equality and freedom, and he fought for those ideals with the support of his people. His time as dictator was spent in aiding those who were poor, those who were ignored, those who needed the power of the government

58 Castro and Ramonet, *Fidel Castro: My Life: An Autobiography*, 243.

to help them. He never gave up his need to serve the Cuban people, despite the Cold War that raged around this time period, and the constant influences of super-powered countries such as the United States and the Soviet Union. Castro was proud to announce to his people that “the Cuba Revolution is changing what was yesterday a land without hope, a land of poverty and illiteracy, into one of the most advanced and developed countries in this continent.”⁵⁹ And that was his goal all along.

⁵⁹ Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks*, 23.

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