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Fidel Castro – 20th Century's Little Giant

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Fidel Alejandro Castro Ruz

Cuba, the tiny Caribbean island State about 90 miles off the coast of the United States, has played an out-sized, in fact a ridiculously obsessive role in American political and public psyche for over 60 years, primarily because of one man, Fidel Alejandro Castro Ruz, who died at the age of 90 years, on November 25, 2016. We know the American one-sided image of him, but here is an attempt at a more balanced view, showing Fidel Castro in a clearer and fairer light, we hope.

Fidel Castro was, geo-politically, the tiny mite that successfully defied all attempts by the American Government, under 10 successive US Presidents, to destroy him (*with hundreds of assassination attempts by the CIA, estimated at 638*) and to crush his socialist revolution, because he had the temerity, by armed struggle, to attempt to overthrow the brutal and corrupt dictatorial Cuban regimes before him, that sold out the country and the Cuban people to American mafia and corporate interests, for kickbacks, and an open license to rob the country. In 1963, *US President John F. Kennedy*, in an interview, spelled out the state of affairs in Cuba clearly, and America's contribution to it.

"I believe that there is no country in the world including any and all the countries under colonial domination, where economic colonization, humiliation and exploitation were worse than in Cuba, in part owing to my country's policies during the Batista regime. I approved the proclamation which Fidel Castro made in the Sierra Maestra, when he justifiably called for justice and especially yearned to rid Cuba of corruption. I will even go further: to some extent it is as though Batista was the incarnation of a

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number of sins on the part of the United States. Now we shall have to pay for those sins. In the matter of the Batista regime, I am in agreement with the first Cuban revolutionaries. That is perfectly clear.” — U.S. President John F. Kennedy, to Jean Daniel, October 24, 1963



Fidel Castro interviewed by Jean Daniel, in Havana, Cuba, November 1963

The Castro-led revolution ‘liberated’ Cuba from a string of corrupt dictators and their politically sponsored gangs that brutally suppressed dissent against these dictators. He also liberated Cuba from their political, social, economic repression, massive American corporate ownership, and the control of the *American mafia* on casinos, gambling, prostitution and drugs and the wholesale pillaging of the country. But of course Fidel Castro was never appreciated by the democratic, freedom, law & order espousing America, because it went directly against American held commercial interests, even if some of them were directly controlled by the American organized crime “the Mafia”.

America's treatment of Castro and Cuba was not unlike American treatment, to this day, of Iran, whose democratically elected government was dislodged by the CIA, and British Intelligence, while a puppet dictator was installed, the ‘Shah of Iran’, who brutally suppressed his people, enriched himself, and let American and British oil companies exploit Iranian oil.

The former American Ambassador to Cuba, Earl T. Smith, testified to the US Senate in 1960 that:

"Until Castro, the U.S. was so overwhelmingly influential in Cuba that the American ambassador was the second most important man, sometimes even more important than the Cuban president."^[47] In addition, nearly "all aid" from the U.S. to Batista's government was in the "form of weapons assistance", which "merely strengthened the Batista dictatorship" and "completely failed to advance the economic welfare of the Cuban people."^[36] Such actions later "enabled Castro and the Communists to encourage the growing belief that America was indifferent to Cuban aspirations for a decent life."^[36]

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Havana, Cuba's capital, became the home to the American Mafioso, Meyer Lanski and Lucky Luciano, and the 'Sin Capital' where the American and World elite came to play and indulge their more warped appetites, without the constraints of American or European mainland moral or legal restrictions.

According to reports from those times, cocaine and other 'recreational' drugs were not only available in unlimited quantities, but were almost as cheap as rum.

The deal to give the American mobsters unfettered access to Havana's revenues from all manner of criminal activity, gambling, prostitution, and drugs was made with the Cuban Dictator General Batista, for a percentage of the profits, at the iconic New York Hotel, the Waldorf - Astoria, by the famous American mobster Meyer Lanski.

When Batista fled Cuba, in 1958, ahead of Castro's revolution victory, he is estimated to have taken with him \$300 Million in accumulated wealth primarily from all the kickbacks and percentages of the deals with mobsters and American Corporations, such as ITT (*International Telephone & Telegraph*), that received permission to raise rates 'excessively' in Cuba, and as a symbol of appreciation of being allowed to gouge the Cuban people, ITT presented Batista a 'Golden Telephone', that sits in a Havana Museum as a symbol of the corruption between American interests and the Cuban President Batista, and the selling out of the Cuban people.



Upon fleeing Cuba, Batista and his officials and families left the country with over \$700 Million (*in American dollars, 1958 value*) from the accumulated wealth and the raiding of the Cuban Treasury.

Americans practically owned Cuba and its Dictators, and government officials, and had a free say in all matters regarding the country and its policies. This condition is succinctly described by John F. Kennedy:

"At the beginning of 1959 United States companies owned about 40 percent of the Cuban sugar lands—almost all the cattle ranches—90 percent of the mines and mineral concessions—80 percent of the utilities—practically all the oil industry—and supplied two-thirds of Cuba's imports."

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No wonder Americans were so incensed, and stayed incensed for over 60 years, when Fidel Castro overthrew the Batista Dictatorship, nationalized all American owned assets, threw out the American Mafia, and started to try and improve the lot of the Cuban poor through his socialist programs of free education and health, housing and jobs for all.

That sort of redistribution of wealth, along with the removal of American backed Dictators, and rampant corruption, and the total focus on the uplifting of the exploited poor at the cost of the rich, is anathema to American style Capitalism. In fact, that sort of a people orientated, social and economic governing model is – downright Communism! - even though no Communist country can claim to have done as much for its poor as Castro's revolution did, not the Soviet leadership nor the Chinese leadership.



In his early years, Fidel Castro provided literacy, high standards of professional training in medicine and engineering, housing and road development. Cuba became renowned the World over, for its athletics program, its export of doctors and engineers and educationists to other developing countries, and in one of the Pan American Games held in Cuba, it won more gold medals than the United States. But all these accomplishments and successes of Castro's were not the kind of information that the US Government wanted known. So along with trying their damndest to kill him, and stop the revolution, the American Government kept up the kind of propaganda about Castro and Cuba that Americans still swallow whole today.

After the Castro led revolution took over Cuba, America was not only incensed, but went a bit crazy. All the successive Presidents, eventually 10 of them (*till Obama tried to put an end to the craziness*), directed the CIA to remove Castro at all costs, including by assassination (*the 638 attempts included everything from exploding cigars to deadly biological agents*), and

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by sponsoring and mounting multiple invasions, and internal and external subversion of his government.



All this time of course, America kept tightening economic sanctions against Cuba till Cuba's economy was an economic disaster, and then blamed Castro and his regime for the disaster.

Fidel Castro had a number of major flaws.

His hatred for the hypocritical, exploitive nature of American capitalism was one of them. Having watched, since childhood, the injustice and exploitation of the poor, even though he was from a well-off family, he was warped for life, and incapable of looking at Capitalism positively under any circumstances.

His equally distorted view of Communism, and his unquestioning faith in it, as the only true path to equality for all people, was equally warped, unjustified and impractical, but he couldn't help himself. He was in love with the idea of the utilitarian panacea that was Communism, and no amount of reality checks, even the failed regimes and policies of the Soviet Union and China, the two of the most prominent examples of pure communist States, dissuaded him from it for his entire life.

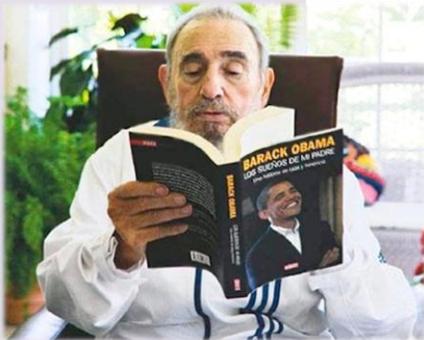
This major flaw led to his inability to shift economic policies towards Capitalism, to Cuba's great economic detriment, even after Russia and China had abandoned strict Socialist/Communist economic policies and embraced some version of Capitalism. This meant that for most of his years at the helm of Cuba, the country suffered economically, and remained under developed, dependent on assistance and aid from Russia, and when that stopped, assistance from Venezuela and other Central and South American sympathizers. Of course the constant *decades long crippling economic sanctions by the US*, and to a lesser degree the other Western countries, didn't help him or Cuba at all, but made economic development and progress a perpetually difficult battle.

Castro was a lifelong passionate ideologue. That was his other flaw. As the head of a country that desperately needed economic development, he needed to compromise a little to court the rich West, but he couldn't do it. His



passionate dislike for the exploitive nature of Western policies, manifest in old UK/European colonialism, and new American imperialism, remained unadulterated to the end of his life (*though, apparently, he slightly softened in old age*). In that regard he was not only one of the longest reigning leaders, but he was also one that stayed the truest to his original principals for all his life, a true rarity amongst politicians and political leaders. But his lifelong unwavering commitment to Socialist ideology also did Cuba no good. Apart from keeping the US virulently antagonistic and deeply suspicious, it left no room for change for Cuba, as the World (*especially the Communist World*) changed around him and his country.

As the years passed after the revolution, Castro like most authoritarian leaders would not tolerate dissent, and kept an iron hand over his country. Dissent meant imprisonment and/or worse. And even though he was far better for Cubans than the brutal American backed right wing dictators, who also brooked no dissent and executed many that dared to oppose them, Castro's heavy-handed control over Cuba and its governing as a Dictator, earned him the bitter enmity of the Cubans that fled his regime and are resident in Florida and elsewhere, and the perpetual single-minded hatred of the American government, till the more enlightened Barack Obama became President.



It is, of course, a source of baffling mystery as to why America that tolerates and installs some of the most brutal dictatorships in the World, finds Fidel Castro consistently and particularly offensive. *By comparison to others* that America supports currently, like Saudi Arabia and some African oil rich regimes, and supported in the past like the Shah of Iran or the Central American regimes, or even the ones in Cuba before him, Castro has been downright good to his people and downright tame (*again comparatively speaking*).



Fidel Castro's genuine lifelong passion for the true uplifting of the poorest of the World, made him send his trained countrymen and soldiers to developing countries all over the World to assist in fighting poverty, illiteracy, lack of health care, racism, colonization, apartheid in South Africa (*before the West did anything*) and oppression from colonization and American Imperialism. His genuine concern and efforts won him, and Cuba, the deep respect of many developing countries, their governments, and their leaders.



Globally respected luminaries like Nelson Mandela considered Fidel Castro a hero and a friend for having fought against apartheid and for standing by him. If one was to get past the knee jerk reaction of the Americans to Fidel Castro, most of the World, Communist and Democratic, authoritarian or elected, came to deeply respect a man of unshakeable principals, and lifelong passion for the betterment of the oppressed and poor. The fact that he was not perfect and himself an oppressor, were his considerable shortcomings that prevented him from universal acceptance.