

Forces leading to revolution in cuba

[History](#), [Revolution](#)



Forces Leading to Revolution in Cuba Background Cuba was discovered by Europeans in 1492. From 1511 it was a colony of Spain and became a base from which Spanish exploration and colonisation took place. Numbers of indigenous Cubans dropped dramatically as a result of European diseases and harsh Spanish rule. Those who remained were converted to Catholicism by missionaries. Cuba became a producer of tobacco and sugar due to its rich soil. The low numbers of indigenous Cubans caused problems for the Spanish, who needed large amounts of cheap labour which led to importation of African slaves to work on the sugar and tobacco plantations. Currently, the population of Cuba is mainly of Spanish and African descent. Although Cuba is a small island, its location meant that it was strategically important to colonising Empires such as Britain and Spain. The Spanish built forts all over the island and maintained an army to control population and defend its colony. In 1763 Britain made a failed attempt to seize Cuba. Brief Summary of Forces leading to Revolution Spanish and American Imperialism:

- * Cuba was a colony of Spain from 1511 to 1899.
- * 1895 Jose Marti led a revolt that severed Cuba's ties with Spain, but did not lead to independence.
- * However, the U. S adopted a protectorate to prevent European colonisation.
- * 1898 U. S declared war on Spain which ended Spain's rule in Cuba.
- * Cuban Republic was declared in 1902.
- * The Platt Amendment gave the U. S the right to intervene and restricted Cuba's international political capacity.
- * U. S supported the Cuban economy by purchasing Cuban sugar.

Fulgencio Batista: * Batista was in control of the army. After leading the Sergeants Revolt, he also controlled the presidency. * Officially president from 1940-1944 where his government drew up a democratic constitution. * 1952 a

military coup returned Batista to the position of President where he abolished the constitution. Fidel Castro and the 26th July Movement * 1953 Castro lead an attack on the Moncada Barracks as a reaction to Batista's oppression. This failed and Castro was imprisoned. * Castro and his followers formed the July 26 Movement and gathered support and trained in the mountains making guerrilla warfare against the government. * Growing number of Cubans supported Castro. Batista fled the country on 1 January 1959. American and Spanish Imperialism * As Cuban agriculture thrived under Spanish colonisation, movements towards independence grew. * This was fuelled by the fact their industries of sugar and tobacco were creating great wealth but all profits went to the Spanish. * First rebellion in 1819 was brutally crushed. * By 1855 rebellions led the Spanish government passing repressive laws banning Cubans from setting up businesses, taking post, taking legal action against a Spaniard and travelling without permission. The Monroe Doctrine * The U. S was interested in Cuba from 1783 when President Adams described Cuba as ' a natural extension of the Northern American continent' * In 1823 President Monroe affirmed that the U. S would not become involved in European affairs and Europeans should no longer interfere with the Americas, any attempt by a European power to influence or colonise any independent nation in the Americas would be seen as an attack on the peace and safety of the U. S. Therefore the U. S had the right to act in order to protect the region. Became known as the Monroe Doctrine * Placed U. S in the role of protector of independent countries of the Americas and became the philosophy behind the American actions in Cuba. Another justification was ' Manifest Destiny'. The U. S believed that its system of

democracy and free enterprise should spread through the rest of the Americas. * By 1850 insurrections were encouraged by the U. S who wanted to end Spanish colonisation and control Cuba. * 1880s America was heavily invested in Cuban economy, particularly sugar. * War broke out in 1895, led by Jose Marti which severed ties with Spain but did not achieve independence. * In 1895 the Committee of Cuban Exiles in the U. S was established to encourage Americans to support the insurrection by supplying American newspapers with stories of the war to win support for their cause. The Spanish-American War * In 1898 the battleship USS Maine arrived at Cuba on a courtesy visit. On 15 February the Maine exploded and 260 crew members were killed. * In April 1898 the U. S declared war on Spain and Spanish rule over Cuba ended with their defeat in 1899. * The U. S. set up a military government until the Cuban Republic was proclaimed in 1902. The Platt Amendment * The new Cuban constitution, drawn up in 1902 contained the Platt Amendment, which gave the U. S. the legal right to intervene in Cuba in order to protect ' life, property and individual liberties.' * The makers of the constitution were presented with the Amendment by the U. S in 1901 and were warned that American troops would not leave Cuba until its terms had been adopted. These included: * Restricted Cubas ability to make treaties with other countries. * Gave the U. S the power to intervene in Cuban Affairs. * Gave the U. S the right to buy or lease land for military bases. * Granted a ' perpetual lease' on Guantanamo Bay so that a Navel Base could d be built. * Originally presented as a way in way, which the United States would help to protect Cuba's independence, to many critics the Platt Amendment effectively placed Cuba under American Control. The term '

sphere of influence' was used to describe the relationship between Cuba and the U. S. * 1906, 1090 and 1912 American forces occupied Cuba again after rebellions took place against the Cuban government. * Between 1917 and 1923, American marines occupied Cuba to put down strikes in the sugar mills and protect American property. * Representatives of American sugar interests were leading political figures and they enforced policies that suited American economic interests at the expense of Cuban national development. * U. S encourage the development of the sugar industry by guaranteeing to import Cuban sugar. * By 1925, American interests dominated Cuba's banks, mines and rail transport as well as tobacco, cattle and sugar. * Between 1902 and 1928, a number of governments rose and fell in Cuba, culminating in the establishment of a dictatorship by Gerardo Machado in 1928. He had a personal police force of over 15000 and simply assassinated opponents. * When Machado fell in 1933, Serpent Fulgenico Batista controlled the Cuban army and after the Sergeants Revolt controlled the Presidency. * The sergeants revolt took place in 1993 when Batista and other military leaders staged a coup and controlled the country for six days. Since this Batistas influence over the presidency was absolute. * Batista became president from 1940-1944 and again in 1952. During his first term he allowed a democratic constitution to be drawn up. However, after he stepped down he was followed by two repressive and increasingly corrupt governments. * A number of Cubans disgusted by theses governments founded the Orthodox Party, which soon won thousands of supporters. The leader Eduardo Chibas, called for economic and political independence and social justice. By 1951 it had gained enough support to become the party favoured to win the

upcoming election in 1952. * However in March, Batista overthrew the government in a military coup weeks before the presidential elections. He abolished the constitution and dissolved Cubas congress and outlawed the Cuban Communist Party. Batista's Cuba * Under Batista large scale gambling flourished in Havana, which became known as the Latin Las Vegas, and Cuba became profitable for American business as well as the centre of organised crime. * Political opposition was quickly and brutally crushed. * By Latin America standards, Cuba was relatively prosperous. Some Cuban sugar workers were the highest paid but their work was seasonal, employed four months a year. * Cuba had stark inequalities- in rural areas landless peasants lived in poverty and over half of all urban wage earners were paid less than a dollar a day. * Although Cubas national wealth was high, it was not equally distributed with a large middle class frustrated by its lack of political power and influence. Nationalism: * Cuban economy appeared to flourish in the 1950s but its dependence on the U. S caused problems. * Cuba had been one of the world major sugar exporters for over 100 year. , however their share of the market was decreasing. * They began to feel that the political price of this economic dependence was too high and since the end of Spanish rule, governments had served the interests of the American sugar market, not the people of Cuba. * The American involvement was resented by the middle class and intellectuals who believed their country had never been allowed to become independent. * Wealthy Cubans enjoyed the benefits of the relative prosperity caused by American dominance of the sugar industry. * American-owned business owned 90% of mines, 40% of sugar industry, 80% of public services, 50% of railways and the who of the oil

industry. * When Batista came to power opposition began immediately. *
Castro and the Attack on Moncada Barracks * Motivation * -Influenced by
Marti's ideas. * -Cuban political scene dominated by struggles between
corrupt politicians 1948-1952 * -Batista's military coup March 10th 1952 led
to the dissolution of parliament, suppression of the constitution and
guarantees and liberties suspended. Also support from Washington and the
majority of the dominant class. * -Inaction of political forces following
Batista's usurpation of power. Castro believed that the only way to oppose
Batista was through an armed uprising. * * The Uprising * -26th July 1953 * -
Aim was to commence an armed uprising against Batista's repression and to
gain weapons and arm the people. * -How: organised attack against the
Moncada barracks at Santiago de Cuba with a group of 150 supporters,
including 2 women. * * Results * -Failed due to lack of coordination among
the diverse groups commanding the assault. * -Met by 1000 troops, turned
into a massacre of the revolutionaries. * -9 rebels were killed in combat, 11
that were captured in the Civil Hospital were immediately executed within
2hrs of the attack and 34 fleeing rebels were captured in the following 3
days and were murdered after admitting participation. * -A handful of rebels
(including Castro) escaped into the countryside but were caught soon after. *
-Castro only escaped death due to the intervention of the Archbishop of
Santiago. Thus he was only arrested and brought to trial. * * Legacy * -
Despite its overall failure, Castro made the most of the situation and it
became an important part of the long-term success of his revolution. * -Used
it as a recruiting tool-he was the only leader who had attempted to do
something about Batista's regime; attracted Cubans to the movement. * -

The massacre of rebels damaged the credibility of Batista and his army. **
Castro's Trial * -1/99 captured survivors remained for trial. * -15 remained in
hiding and never went to court. * -Began Sept 21st-Oct 6th 1953 * -Verdicts
in Cuba determined by a panel of 3 judges, not by a jury. ** How did Castro
perform on trial? * -Transformed himself from accused to accuser * -Raised
accusation of the murder of prisoners by the military * -Used trial to attack
the gov. verbally * -Said he was merely doing his civic duty as a Cuban in
standing up for democracy. * -No denial, took pride in his actions. * -The gov.
shut him down and claimed he was too sick to continue with the trial,
therefore it made the government look worse. ** " History will absolve me" *
-Castro's official statement was later published under the above title. * -
Became blueprint for the 26th July Movement. * -Identified the problems with
Batista's rule and what Castro wanted to change: * -A more dignified and just
nation * -Liberty * -Restoration of civil liberties and political democracy * -
End to foreign ownership of land and industry * -Problems: land
industrialisation, housing, unemployment, education and health * -Who:
unemployed, farm labourers, the landless, industrial workers, teachers, small
businesses, young professionals. ** The rebels were condemned to varying
years of detention and Castro received a 15-year sentence on the Isle of
Pines. ** 26th July Movement * -After an amnesty was granted to prisoners
in 1955, Castro and his followers, now known as the July 26 Movement
moved to Mexico in order to plan to overthrow the Batista gov. * -Che
Guevara joined them in 1956. * -Within 18 months, the Movement launched
another attack on the Batista regime. Che and Castro organised an
expedition to Cuba by boat that would launch their campaign against Batista.

* -A hurricane in the Gulf of Mexico caused their boat to arrive two days late and in the wrong place. * -Rather than meeting supporters as they landed, they were bombed by government forces. * -Three days after landing in Cuba in Dec 1956, most of the rebels were either killed or captured by government troops. Only about 20/[originally] 82 rebels survived and regrouped in the Sierra Maestra mountains. * -Over the next three years, they stayed in the mountains and fought government troops whilst building a small but well-organised guerrilla movement. * -By 1958, there were [only] 300 rebels in the Sierra Maestra. * * Reasons for the formation of the 26th July Movement/1959 Revolution (i. e. why the Batista regime was so unpopular) * -The Cuban economy depended on US demand for its sugar. * - Cuba had become a playground for the US with gambling, prostitution and large-scale corruption flourishing and the American Mafia an increasing presence. * -The sugar industry could only offer seasonal work for four months per year. * -Batista had come to power through a military coup and refused to allow democratic reforms, including implementing the democratic 1940 constitution. * -Poverty was widespread in the countryside and there were few welfare or social services. * Castro gained popularity by: * - Creating an image through the media as the legit leader of anti-Batista forces * -Promising land reforms and the implementation of the democratic constitution of 1940. * * Guerilla Warfare * The principles behind the July 26 Movement's campaign: * -Popular victory against an oppressive government was possible through an armed struggle. * -It was not necessary to wait until all the conditions for making revolution fell into place, the insurrection could create them. * -The insurrection should take place in rural areas. * * -The

first priority of the Movement was to gain support of the local villagers in the Sierra Maestra. The active support of the local people was vital if the movement was to get supplies, shelter and protection. They also realised that they needed to maintain and increase their level of support in urban areas as well. * -In July 1957, the rebels published the Sierra Manifesto, which outlined the Movement's main policies: * -Freedom for all political prisoners * -Freedom of the press * -Implementation of the democratic constitution of 1940. * -The movement divided into two parts, the Sierra and the Llano-the underground, urban wing of the movement led by Frank Pais. * * The Fidelistas come to power * -Demonstrations, arson attacks and bombings in the cities by July 26 supporters met with vicious reprisals by the police and army. The urban war against Batista led to more deaths than the entire guerrilla war in the Sierra Maestra. * -It is estimated that 20 000 (mostly young) Cubans were killed in urban areas. * -The harshness of Batista's reaction to opposition only served to drive many previously moderate Cubans to side with the rebels and take part in the urban uprising. * -Support for Castro also began to grow outside Cuba, particularly within Mexico and the US where supporters sent money, food and weapons. * * - The Movement was effective in using propaganda to gain support. They set up a pirate radio station and also granted an interview to The New York Times in 1957. When the article was published, Castro gained an international profile and his stature as the leader of the anti-Batista forces grew. * -By 1957, some sections of the Cuban army began to support Castro. * * The Final Months * The final blow for Batista came with the American government withdrawing its support for Batista by refusing to supply the

Cuban armed forces. ** May 1958: * Batista began an offensive designed to finally destroy Castro's forces. The Cuban army, although vastly outnumbering the rebels, was not adequately trained for the dense terrain of the mountains. Battalions were easily isolated and quickly defeated in surprise attacks by the well-trained and highly mobile July 26 guerrillas. The capture of 450 of Batista's men gave the rebels over 600 new weapons. ** July * The battle of El Jigüe proved a decisive victory for the Movement and marked to beginning of the rebel counteroffensive. ** August * Two separate groups of fighters left the Sierra Maestra. The first (led by Camilo Cienfuegos) moved towards Pinar del Rio in the western end of Cuba. The second group (led by Che Guevara) moved towards Las Villas province in central Cuba. After several humiliating defeats at the hands of the rebels, Batista's army was pushed back. ** October * Law Number Three of the Sierra Maestra was proclaimed by the Movement. It granted ownership to tenant farmers, squatters and share-croppers working on areas of land less than 67 acres. (27 hectares) ** December * Despite harsh conditions, the two groups of fighters led by Cienfuegos and Guevara captured a number of towns. This resulted in the rebels effectively controlling half of Cuba. The Fidelistas continued to push towards Havana, taking towns as military support for Batista fell away. ** January 1st 1959 * BATISTA FLED CUBA AND THE FIDELISTAS TRIUMPHANTLY ENTERED HAVANA! HOORAYYYY * -From then on, Cuba underwent a huge transformation. * -The Fidelistas came to power in a country rife with inequality and social problems. Unemployment was high, half a million children did not go to school, 43% of Cubans could not read nor write, 5 million Cuban (out of a population of 6 million) did not

own homes and lived in huts without light, water or sewage. * -In Havana alone, there were more than 300 brothels and over 15 000 prostitutes. Most Cubans could not go to the beaches as they were privately owned. * -Castro became PM and introduced popular measures e. g. land reforms, wage increases and rent reductions. Roads, schools and hospitals began to be built in rural areas. The casinos were closed. Private beaches and country clubs were opened to all. * -Batista's supporters who had not fled Cuba were jailed and had their assets seized. Those accused of political murders and torture were put on trial and executed, approx. 550 executions took place.