

# The cuban revolution

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



The day was July 26, 1953. A group of approximately 135 rebels, led by Fidel Castro (Appx. 1) and his brother Raul Castro Ruz (Appx. 2) assaulted the Moncada Barracks (Appx. 3) in the Santiago de Cuba Province (Appx. 4). Although the attack was poorly executed, and the aftermath landed both leaders in jail, it has become widely accepted as the beginning of the Cuban Revolution; an armed revolt that led to the overthrow of the corrupt dictator, Fulgencio Batista (Appx. 5). However, the roots of this revolution date back almost a century from the day.

What were these roots that led the prosperous country of Cuba (Appx. ), which had so much success in the colonial era, to take up arms against its government? Its economy by the 18th and 19th century, after the fall of Haiti, led Cuba to become one of the powerhouse colonies, economically, in the Caribbean. Then again, Cuba's independence from Spain was also a result of another revolution in Cuba's history that occurred around this same time period. Inevitably, the question arises.

What were the origins of this second revolution and when did it occur? The answers of such questions are still unsolved to the researcher. On October 28th, 1492, Christopher Columbus (Appx. ) landed on the beautiful and mysterious island of Cuba. In honor of the daughter of King Ferdinand 5th (Appx. 8) and Queen Isabella 1st (Appx. 9) of Spain, he originally named the island Juana, which only later became known as Cuba due to its aboriginal name Cubanascnan. The large island was a colossal achievement for Columbus, whom thought at first it was the peninsula of Asia's mainland. The vast amount of land compared to Hispaniola, Columbus' first find, offered

more possibilities of gold and farmland. However, it was inhabited by the Ciboney and Tainos, who presented a great difficulty for the explorer.

It was not until 1511 that the island was set to be conquered by the Conquistador, Diego Velasquez (Appx. 10), as he established the town of Baracoa. After three years of fighting a losing battle, the Tainos were inevitably defeated and in 1514, a settlement was founded. This small settlement later became the popular Havana, or La Habana (Appx. 11) the new capital of the colony. As the encomienda system was established in the growing colony, the population of the indigenous began to decrease as the Tainos succumbed to European born diseases such as influenza and small pox, to which they had no natural immunity.

By the Mid 16th century, the Spanish Roman Catholic Priest " Las Casas", in a desperate act to save the Indians from extinction, suggested the use of African slaves as another source of labor. The new slaves came at a perfect time as Tobacco, a plant that the Tainos thought the Spaniards to cultivate and roll into cigars, became the main export of Cuba. Eventually, sugar cane emerged as the main export in the Caribbean and as a result, even more African slaves were imported into the island.

Africans, Mestizos and Spaniards became the population of the island by the beginning of the 18th century; this would be the population that led the island into not only prosperity, but revolution. In the 18th century, Cuba became the richest colony in the Caribbean as the Haitian Revolution brought an end to the competition between the two colonies. Cuba's economic success was a result of Spain's interest in developing the colony. Unlike the other colonies, the income made from the exports stayed in the

colony, rather than being sent to the Spain, and was put towards developing it.

An example of this was the success of Havana as a city. It became a huge city for its time, and in 1728, gained a university and other luxuries such as a postal service and a newspaper in 1763. Another contribution to Cuba's success was its population; in a 1775 census of the colony Cuba had a population of 171, 600 people, 75, 180 of which were non-white. However, as apprenticeship ended in 1838, Cuba went into a labor shortage and an economic crisis. Cuba was certainly not new to the whole 'revolution' idea when the time came in 1953; the island's own independence was itself the result of a revolution against the mother country.

This first revolution however, was made up of three wars that took place through 1868-1902. The first was called 'Guerra de los Diez Anos' or 'The Ten Years War' and took place in 1868-1878. Poverty stricken Cuba, during the economic crisis in 1866/67, was in no way improving as the colonial leaders continued to take profits that were left to develop the island, and in addition, Cuba's population still had no political rights, which greatly inspired underground movements that eventually led to the Ten Year war on October 10th of 1868.

The second war for independence was called 'Guerra Chiquita' or 'Little War'. It took place in 1879-1880 and had the same background as the Ten Year War. The only differences were the tactics and leaders in it. The outcome was a positive one, for it prodded the Spanish to promise to reform the economy. When they failed to do so, it led to another uprising 15 years later. The third and final war for independence was the 'Guerra de la <https://assignbuster.com/the-cuban-revolution/>

Independencia Cubana' or 'The Cuban war for Independence' and took place in 1895-1898.

This revolution was not only another attempt of gaining independence from Spain, but also a way to prevent the United States from annexing Cuba as the US financial capital began flowing into the country, mostly into the tobacco and sugar industries. In the end Cuba was able to gain Independence officially on May 20th, 1902 after decades of struggle and perseverance. Cuba's relation to the US was the epitome of the Cuban Revolution. The US' persistence in being involved in Cuba's government caused outrage among Cubans during the early 1900's, and is considered one of the catalysts of the revolution.

After the Spanish-American war in 1898, Cuba endorsed the secure withdrawal of United States troops known as the 'Platt Amendment'(Appx. 12). This amendment stipulated that the US could intervene in Cuba's political, economical and military affairs if necessary, and also gave the US control over Guantanamo Bay, where they established the United States Naval Station. By 1926, US companies owned 60% of Cuba's sugar industry and were greatly involved with the government.

The US's involvement in Cuba was made worse when US president Franklin D. Roosevelt (Appx. 3) incorporated the 'Good Neighbor' Policy; basically a scheme for the US to protect its commercial interest in Latin American countries, however, passed out as a policy that stipulated the US's involvement when the countries were in need of help. After the overthrow of the Cuban government, under Gerardo Machado, in 1933 by rebels, the US

became involved once again, and sent 29 warships for 'use if necessary' for US troops still in the country.

When Cuba's new president, Ramon Grau, immediately abolished the Platt Amendment, the US Ambassador, Sumner Welles (Appx. 4), described the new government as "communistic and irresponsible" and as a result the US refused to recognize Grau's government. After Grau was made president, he assigned Fulgencio Batista (Appx. 5), as Army Chief of Staff. A move, which in time, would also contribute to the Cuban Revolution. With the rank of Colonel, Batista practically controlled the presidency, and eventually conspired with Welles in a military coup d'état (Appx. 15). Batista forced Grau to resign just 100 days after he went into office, in 1934.

He was replaced by Carlos Mendieta and five days later, the US recognized Cuba's new government. This new government lasted 11 months and began what was known as a string of 'puppet presidents'. After Mendieta, governments were led by, Jose Barnet (5 months) and Miguel Mariano Gomez (7 months), before Federico Laredo Bru led from 1936-1940. Under the new Cuban Constitution of 1940, supported by a coalition of political parties one of which being the old Communist Party of Cuba, Batista won the presidency and reigned until 1944.

It was during his presidency that the 1940 Constitution was established. Shortly after the new president of Cuba was inaugurated, Batista left the island and moved to New York saying, "I felt safer there". It was here where he felt 'safer' that he began establishing relations with the American Mafia, most noticeably in the notorious 1946 Havana Conference (Appx. 16). He formed a friendship with mobsters Charles 'Lucky' Luciano and Meyer

Lansky. In return for some of the profits, Batista promised to give the Mafia control over Cuba's racetracks and casinos, turning Havana into the 'Latin Las Vegas'.

In 1952, Batista won the presidency again in another military coup d'état. He ousted outgoing President Carlos Prío Socarras, canceled the elections and assumed control of the government as provisional president. Upon his return to power, Batista did not continue the progressive social policies of his earlier term. He was consumed by a desire for recognition by the upper strata of Cuban society, which had never accepted him in their social circles and clubs. While he also worked to increase his personal fortune, poverty on the island was growing.

In 1953, the average Cuban family had an income of \$6.00 a week, 15 to 20 percent of the labor force was chronically unemployed, and only a third of the homes had running water. Private American companies such as ITT dominated the island's economy, as the US government used their influence to advance the companies' interests and increase their profits. A gold-plated phone, presented to Batista by ITT, was an 'expression of gratitude', but in truth, a symbol of the corruption. It was then that corruption in Cuba reached its peak. It was then that something drastic had to be done for Cuba to get out of the drains. It was July 26th, 1953.

The revolution had begun with that attack on the Moncada Barracks. After the attack failed, a highly political trial was held and it was in this trial that Fidel Castro gave his famous 4-hour speech, ending with the words, "Condemn me, it doesn't matter. History will absolve me"-Fidel Castro. Fidel was sentenced to 15 years in the Presidio Modelo (Appx. 17) prison while his

<https://assignbuster.com/the-cuban-revolution/>

brother got 13 years. In 1955, due to broad political pressure, many prisoners were released, including the Castro brothers, who both then fled to Mexico where they joined with other exiles and began planning another attack to overthrow Batista.

It was here that Fidel met and joined forces with the infamous Argentinean Marxist Revolutionary Ernesto 'Che' Guevara (Appx. 18). After a year of planning, 82 revolutionists, including the Castro brothers, Che Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos (Appx. 19), left from the port of Tuxpan, Veracruz in Mexico on the 25th of November 1956 and arrived in Cuba on the 2nd of December. After three days of trekking through the Sierra Maestra Mountains, the band of rebels were attacked by Batista's army and only a small number of survivors, including the leaders of the revolution, were able to escape back into the mountains.

The rebels were able to band together again and form the core leadership of the Guerilla Army. Nearly two years of guerilla warfare was fought between Batista's army of 40, 000 against Fidel's 200, always ending up with the Cuban army forced to retreat. The US ambassador was recalled back, weakening the government's mandate further, while Cuba's citizens began to join the fight, an example of which was the 1957 attack on the Presidential Palace in Havana (Appx. 20). Batista forces finally responded with an attack on the mountains called Operation Verano, which sent some 12, 000 soldiers, half of them untrained recruits, into the mountains.

In a series of small skirmishes, Castro's determined soldiers defeated the Cuban army. In the Battle of La Plata, which lasted from July 11-July 21, 1958, Castro's forces defeated an entire battalion, capturing 240 men while

losing just 3 of their own. The tide nearly turned on July 29, 1958, when Batista's troops almost destroyed Castro's small army, some 300 men, at the Battle of Las Mercedes. With his forces pinned down by superior numbers, Castro asked for, and received, a temporary cease-fire. Over the next seven days, while fruitless negotiations took place, Castro's forces gradually escaped from the trap.

By August 8, Castro's entire army had escaped back into the mountains, and Operation Verano had effectively ended in failure for the Batista government. On the 21st of August, 1958, Castro began his own offensive and began to take over the southern provinces on the island. Meanwhile, Che Guevara and Cienfuegos led armies up north towards Havana with victories in the Battle of Yaguajay and Battle of Santa Clara. 12 hours after the victory at Santa Clara, Batista fled to the Dominican Republic. On the 2nd of January, the rebels stormed into the city of Havana.

The military commander in the city, Colonel Rubido, ordered his soldiers not to fight and Castro's forces took over the city and the country. " Our revolution is endangering all American possessions in Latin America. We are telling these countries to make their own revolution. " — Che Guevara, October 1962 Castro's vision of a Cuba free of US corruption was complete. Batista died on the 6th of August, 1973 of a heart attack. El Che was captured, tortured and executed by CIA agents in Bolivia on October 9th, 1967.

Fidel Castro is still alive but has retired out of politics for health reasons while his brother Raul is the president of Cuba. The factors which led to the Cuban Revolution were mainly the US's involvement in Cuba's economy, <https://assignbuster.com/the-cuban-revolution/>

government and Batista's corruption which resulted in poverty. These factors, however, originated in Cuba's first revolution for independence. In the end, the revolution was necessary in order for Cuba to prosper out of oppression; however, it was really a way to get a simple message implanted into USA's conceited brain, " You cannot control something that doesn't belong to you. Yes, it was in fact the US that caused such a revolution.

It was the US's failed attempts to annex ate Cuba and their persistence that caused such a revolution and in many ways the US has succeeded in the rest of the world but not in Cuba. Everywhere you go it is the ' American dream' that everyone wants. US influence around the world can be seen, especially in the researcher's country. It is like a slow pandemic, affecting our world. Cuba fought against that and for that they have been shunned by many. It is time to put Che Guevara's dream into action. It is time for a World Revolution.