

# Fidel castro's methods to obtain power



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Fidel Castro's origins begin in 1933, when a coup d'état led by Fulgencio Batista, coined the Revolt of the Sergeants, overthrew the government of Gerardo Machado. He continued to puppet govern for over 20 years, until in 1952, Batista once again ran for president, only to find himself losing. Batista threw a second military coup, canceling all future elections and taking control as a provisional president. Although Cuba's economy was comparatively "developed" in relation to neighboring countries when Batista assumed power, almost a third of the population lived in poverty. Batista continued to support the Platt Amendment, continuing the cycle of a reverse economy with the United States. The monocrop economy relied on sugar, causing deflation. This resentment led to millions of resentful Cubans, with Fidel Castro being one of them. In July of 1952, Castro attacked the Moncada military barracks in hopes of sparking a revolution in lower-middle classes by arming them with guns. This failed attempt led to Castro's imprisonment and his "History Will Absolve Me" trial speech, making him a national hero. Castro's second attempt succeeded, and with the gathered support from Mexico and the U. S., as well as advice from Che Guevara, he used guerilla warfare to overthrow Batista.

Uncertainty lies within the extent of the origins of Castro's rule. While some historians believe Castro became communist due to the origins of the country and his upbringings, other historians claim that it was the driving forces outside of the country, including the Soviet Union and the United States, that pushed him into communism. This debate can be argued either way, as it could be none or both factors influencing his establishment. The extent of his feat also is uncertain: was his regime truly a success in Cuba?

How do we know if improving the social and medical care was worth stifling both political and social freedom? Despite all the support from the lower-class, he may have taken something more important from them - freedom.

To a low extent, Castro followed his initial declared ideologies. However, Castro did follow his reestablished ideologies of communism through bridging the gap between the rich and the poor, and later working with the Soviet Union to improve Cuba's economy. Fidel Castro's methods of obtaining power included propaganda and speeches, exploiting Cuba's supposed threat from the United States, the process of nationalization, and strict laws and demoralization against opposing parties.

From Castro's first assault all the way through 1959, Cuba was unsure if Castro would adopt a communist ideology. Following the Moncada assaults in 1953, Castro stated he neither Communist nor Marxist, but instead strived to achieve "social justice in a well-planned economy" (Gallo, 93). He explicitly stated that the July Movement was not a communist movement, but simply rather one with radical ideas. It was not until 1961 that he announced a renewed declaration. Castro stated he had, for many years, been a "Marxist Leninist" (Gallo, 82). Therefore, his rule was not in line with his initial declared ideology, but rather followed an ideology much later in his rule.

Castro's initial ideology consisted of restoring political and civil liberties. After he ended his establishment, Castro took a more radical step of diversifying the economy through a socialist-communist standpoint. He closely followed his newly declared ideology, and when establishing his provisional government in 1959, forming it with a significant number of

liberal supporters (Bourne, 163). In 1961, the Popular Socialist Party, who had once been critical of Fidel Castro, joined forces with him to create the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations (Salazar, Suárez etc., 117).

Throughout his rule, he nationalized Cuba. He continued to follow his communist agenda to such an extreme extent that it led to the resignation of Huber Matos, a leader of the July Movement, as the Military Chief of Camaguey. Matos opposed the party's shift to Marxist principles and was imprisoned for 20 years (Luxenberg, 43). Castro, who had been opposed to joining forces with socialists, had declared himself one after his establishment and followed it to a high extent.

Castro had initially promised a democratic regime, a constitutional government, and free elections within a year of his takeover. As aforementioned, he did not carry through these initial promises, and only until 1976 did he allow an election to occur (Revolutionary, 6). Even then, Castro only allowed members of his Communist Party of Cuba to run, neglecting his promise of fair democracy (Leogrande, 404). His shifting declaration created ambiguity throughout Cuba, demonstrating an inconsistent ideology over the political system.

Fidel Castro's methods of establishment included charismatic speeches and government propaganda. Although he failed to become a single party ruler after the Moncada attacks, he won the support of many Cubans with his "History will Absolve Me" speech. There, he turned the tables around as he explained that Batista truly could not punish the raiders of Moncada because he lacked legitimate authority. He claimed that his assault on Moncada paralleled Jose Marti's patriotism, defining his character as heroic and

selfless. (Daynes, 8). During his July Movement, he noted that he would “ not forget” any of his countrymen (Castro). His movement gained more support because of its militancy towards Batista and its promise to restore civil liberties and political democracy. These speeches formulated the concrete steps for Castro to seize power. Castro also mythologized the revolution and promoted cult-like tendencies through other forms of propaganda. Even before Castro’s Cuban Literacy Campaign, literacy rates were between 60% to 70% (Planas, 90). Therefore, newspapers like *Granma* and *Bohemia*, which were published to raise awareness to Castro’s rising government, had been very effective. Through various forms of his propaganda, Castro implanted the powerful idea into many Cuban’s minds that despite all the issues, both socialism and Castro’s regime were the better alternative (Planas, 90).

Until the rule of Castro, Cuba had always been a puppet, and the United States was the puppeteer. Castro’s manipulated that anger and fear of Cuba’s population to establish his place as a single party ruler. His actions against the United States were not controversial, but rather supported, because the people blamed their terrible conditions on the United States. In 1960, the United States imposed an embargo on Cuba, which strengthened the perceived hostility. In May of 1960, Cuba and the Soviet Union established diplomatic relations. (Benjamin, 152). When the U. S., who owned the oil refineries in Cuba, refused to receive Russian oil, Castro saw this as an opportunity to seize the refineries (Fagen, 70). In 1961, The U. S. opposition against Cuba backfired even further when President Kennedy ordered to overthrow Castro, now known as the Bay of Pigs (Fagen, 70). The

foreign relations between the United States and Cuba helped establish Castro as a legitimate force in the world.

Castro's promise of nationalization, which helped diversify the economy, played a key part of his establishment. Batista's previous support of the Platt amendment and compliance of the monocrop economy had left unemployment at a staggering 50% during off seasons. In response to the increasing social tensions led on by the economy, Castro seized control of the other economic commodities previously owned by the United States. On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1959, Castro seized control of the Cuban Telephone Company, with a net asset of 9 billion USD, kickstarting the nationalization process that was key to his rise to power (Allison, 50). Castro cut income taxes and subsidized healthcare and education, rallying in support for the new government. Castro continued nationalizing American businesses, resulting in officially cutting diplomatic ties with the United States in January 1961 (Cuba, 223). Negotiations with the Soviets and Cuba resulted in a disposition of a large part of the sugar crop meant for the United States. The Agrarian Reform Acts were also passed, which made the distribution of land more equitable, as the agriculture sector more efficient, and the economy less dependent on sugar. Import taxes were imposed, reducing imports, in which Castro used the money from these taxes to further diversify the economy (Campbell, 175-176). In 1961, schooling was nationalized, giving Castro a hold onto the youth of the country. All private schools became public, and any teachers who refused to support the revolution lost their jobs (Cuba, 223). Nationalization helped Castro rise to power among peasants and intellectuals alike because unlike Batista's corrupt regime, it was a genuine

attempt at reestablishing Cuba's government as a reasonable system through closing the gap between social classes.

Castro strictly enforced totalitarian laws continue his establishment as a single party ruler. After Batista's exile, Castro imposed an oppressive model over Cuba, which is still in place today. He claimed that the centralized authority restricts speech and monitored private communications. The Cuban penal code was also written, which punished dangerousness, disrespect, enemy propaganda, dissemination of false information, conspiracies, and illicit association (Fisk, 54-56). These vague laws allowed Castro to incriminate thousands without charge of a specific crime, giving him power to establish himself without enemy opposition in Cuba. In one trial, a writer by the name Heberto Padilla was imprisoned for criticizing the government. His imprisonment led to "The Five-Year Gray Period", a time which writers and artists were afraid to produce anything that could be taken as counter-revolutionary (McMurray, 115). Castro used intimidation throughout his rule, ordering government recruited police, mobs, and other officials to harass independent organizations against his regime (Fisk, Courtney, 56).

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