

¡Patria o Muerte!:
José Martí, Fidel Castro, and the Path to Cuban Communism

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Abstract

What prompted Fidel Castro to choose a communist path for the Cuban Revolution?

There is no way to know for sure what the cause of Castro's decision to state the Marxist nature of the revolution was. However, we can know the *factors* that contributed to this ideological shift. This thesis will argue that the decision to radicalize the revolution and develop a relationship with the Cuban communists was the only logical choice available to Castro in order to fulfill Jose Marti's, Cuba's nationalist hero, vision of an independent Cuba. In doing so, I will look closely at Castro's political awakening, which took place at the University of Havana, and the influence of the Cuban nationalist independence movement on the formation of Castro's politics. I will also analyze Castro's actions in the political context of the period from 1952-1961, which coincides with the formation of Fidel Castro's revolutionary movement (the 26th of July Movement), the Cuban revolution, and the proclamation of the Marxist nature of the revolution. Ultimately, it will be argued that while Castro was a radical nationalist in the Martían sense, he saw the path towards communism as a strategic way to ensure that the revolution would be implemented in a way that would fulfill his nationalist goals of Cuban independence and revolutionary change. This argument will significantly contribute to the available literature on the Cuban Revolution because, while this topic has been touched on, it has not received a full historical treatment which takes into account the factors within the revolutionary movement, as well as Castro's devotion to Cuban history and the ideals of Martí.

Introduction

The evolution of the Cuban Revolution from a radical-nationalist movement to a communist revolution has been the subject of much debate. From scholars of Cuban history to those intimately involved with the revolution, many have put forth differing and often contradictory interpretations of the course of the revolution. However, all of these interpretations agree on one aspect: the decision to move the revolution towards communism was decided primarily, if not solely, by Fidel Castro. Not only was Castro the generator of the revolutionary struggle by organizing of the assault on the Moncada Barracks in 1953, it was his “plan” that laid the foundations of the movement, his leadership that was eventually victorious over the unpopular dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, and his choices that stood as final in deciding the course the revolution would take.¹ That being said, what prompted Fidel Castro to choose a communist path for the Cuban Revolution? Though it is unlikely that the true moment at which Castro decided on such a path for the revolution will be illuminated, what we can know are the factors that went into making such a decision.

The goal of this thesis is twofold. First, it will argue that the choice of declaring the revolution communist in 1961 was informed by Castro’s devotion to the ideals of José Martí – the martyr of the Cuban War of Independence. After Castro’s development of a political and revolutionary consciousness at the University of Havana by studying the life and works of Martí, he created a revolutionary movement that would lead an armed struggle against Batista based on the revolutionary legacy of Martí. Following a rift within this movement between the liberal elements, who proposed a return to the old political order following the revolution, and Castro, who sought to radically change Cuban society in order to fulfill Martí’s vision, Castro wanted to

¹ See Fidel Castro “History Will Absolve Me” in *Revolutionary Struggle: 1947-1958, vol. 1 of the Selected Works of Fidel Castro*, eds. Rolando E. Bonachea and Nelson P. Valdes (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972), 164-221.

lead the revolution in a more radical direction, which is when he established a closer relationship with the Partido Socialista Popular (PSP, the Cuban Communist Party). Second, it will situate the revolution into a broader Cuban history by stating that revolution itself and the declaration of the Marxist nature of the revolution were an extension of the previous revolutionary struggles in Cuba in order to fulfill Martí's vision of an independent Cuba. In this respect, the revolution and the "Marxist" nature of it were uniquely Cuban in character, compounding the experiences of all of Cuba's past revolutionary struggles.

I will be analyzing Castro's time while attending law school at the University of Havana during the period from 1945-1948 in order to detail his political coming of age, looking especially at his study and connection to the ideals of Martí. Using Castro's writings and speeches from this time, as well as those of Martí, I will illustrate that Martí was Castro's political role model and the originator of his revolutionary consciousness, developing in Castro nationalist and anti-imperialist sentiments. These Martían ideals of Cuban independence and nationalism would remain the driving force behind Castro's actions from his University years through the victory of the revolution. I also intend to analyze the political climate and Castro's actions as leader of the 26th of July Movement from the period of 1952-1961 in order to give an in depth glance at the dynamics of the movement before, during, and after the revolution, leading up to the declaration of the "socialist character of the revolution."² I will use official documents of the Movimiento 26 de Julio, radio transcripts, as well as Castro's personal correspondence with members of the movement to display Castro's devotion to Martí throughout his revolutionary struggle. By analyzing the possible factors that convinced Castro of the necessity to shift the revolution towards communism and his desire to emulate his role model Martí, I will

² Fidel Castro, "May Day, Havana, May 1, 1961" in *The Fidel Castro Reader*, ed. David Deutschmann (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 2007), 194-212.

argue that while Castro was a radical nationalist in the Martían sense, he saw that radicalizing the revolution was the only way to ensure that the revolution would be implemented in a way that would fulfill his nationalist goals of Cuban independence and his desire to implement Martí's revolutionary vision.

This study will be broken up into the following sections, while remaining chronological and clear. Chapter one will discuss José Martí and the historical roots of the Cuban Revolution, including a brief survey of Cuban political history as it would have mattered to Castro. Ultimately, this section will establish the connection between Martí and Castro, which will remain an important aspect of the entire thesis. Additionally, it will establish the political climate of post-independence Cuba and the pre-revolutionary era in order to explain why Castro felt that an armed revolution that stayed true to Martí's vision was the only way to solve Cuba's problems. Chapter two is centered on the formation of the Movimiento 26 de Julio and the revolution itself, displaying Castro as the leader of the revolution and cementing the goals of the movement around Martían ideals. This section will also detail the break between the urban and rural factions, leading the revolution towards a radical, strategic relationship with the PSP. Chapter three will deal with the victory of the revolution, its early reforms, and the consolidation of communism in Cuba. It will be argued that the shift towards communism was inspired by Castro's connection to Martí, even though Martí was not a Marxist himself. The conclusion will seek to tie all of these chapters into a broader sense of Cuban history, stating the significance of the study in placing the revolution as a direct result of the history of Cuba.

Historiography

While the scholarship on the Cuban Revolution is abundant, there is little consensus as to what exactly prompted Fidel Castro to choose a Marxist vision for the revolution. This topic has

been hotly debated by historians of Cuba. The fact that Castro is still alive and no new personal accounts on the matter will become available, if they even exist, until long after his death makes locating the moment of his political transformation all the more difficult and subject to conflicting interpretations. Below, I will illustrate several of the dominant historiographical trends found in the literature on this subject as a means of framing the argument I will present in my thesis.

One of the most prevalent views on this matter is related to Castro's supposed early indoctrination into Marxism in his university days from 1945-1950.³ Several authors look to this time period in order get a sense for Castro's political awakening, and what they see leads them to the assumption that Castro was a Marxist from the outset of the revolution. Any sort of study on Castro's university days will undoubtedly tell you that many of the people who he associated with were, in fact, communists.⁴ However, some scholars take this as evidence of Castro's indoctrination into Marxism prior to his attempt to take the Moncada Barracks in 1953. In his work *Roots of Revolution*, Sheldon B. Liss highlights that, on top of Marx and Lenin, Castro and the revolution looked to old Cuban communists, like Julio Antonio Mella and Diego Vicente Tejera, for inspiration for the assault on Moncada, as well as the subsequent communist revolution.⁵ Others cite the prison letters of Castro from the period of 1953-1955 in order to suggest that he was more heavily influenced by Marxism than by other ideologues.⁶ In addition, Donald E. Rice's analysis of the Program Manifesto of the 26th of July Movement argues that Marxist ideology had made its way into the movement's declarations themselves by the eve of

³ This view most likely comes from Castro himself, as this is the view he has related since his declaration of socialism.

⁴ See Tad Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait* (New York: William Morrow and Company, inc., 1986), 89-200.

⁵ Sheldon B. Liss, *Roots of Revolution: Radical Thought in Cuba* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 72 and 37.

⁶ Donald E. Rice, *The Rhetorical Uses of the Authorizing Figure: Fidel Castro and José Martí* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1992), 63.

the revolutionary struggle in 1956.⁷ The general consensus of these scholars is that not only was the communist nature of the revolution predetermined by Castro, it came out of his own communist ideology.

This view is problematic, however, because it is inconsistent with the available primary sources. At no point in his university days does Castro mention Marx's influence in any speech, article, or otherwise. In addition, it seems contrary to the fact that Castro was a founding member of the Ortodoxo party in the late forties. This party was fronted by Eduardo Chibás, an outspoken anti-communist, but nonetheless a left-wing nationalist and disciple of Martí. Chibás made sure that his party was in no way communist. These scholars also tend to overlook the fact that the majority of the membership of the revolutionary group which attempted to take the Moncada Barracks as well as the early membership of the 26th of July Movement came directly out of the youth wing of the Ortodoxo party, espousing the same sort of anti-communist rhetoric as Chibás. This makes the view that Castro was a communist from the outset of the revolution unfounded and inaccurate.

A similar, albeit much more nuanced, view of the Cuban road to communism comes from Samuel Farber. While Farber acknowledges Castro's ties with communists in his university days, he does not suggest that he had, therefore, accepted communism. Rather, this association made him more amenable to their ideas. Farber argues that Castro went through the majority of the revolution without a predetermined plan of the course of the revolution.⁸ However, as the victory of the revolution became apparent, Castro became more receptive to the influence from the pro-communist wing in his revolutionary band and started negotiating with the PSP to determine what the course of the revolution would look like. In the end, Farber argues that the PSP began to

⁷Rice, *Rhetorical Uses*, 71.

⁸ Samuel Farber, *Origins of the Cuban Revolution Reconsidered* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 168.

exert great influence on Castro, and due to the size and strength of the pro-communist wing of the movement, Castro shifted toward communism based on these influences.⁹ While Farber's argument takes into account Cuban history and other factors pressuring Castro, he does not address why Castro was increasingly influenced by the communist wing of his movement and the PSP. In fact, he fails to mention that the communist membership in Castro's movement was limited to two individuals for the vast majority of the revolution.¹⁰ He does, however, suggest the appeal of a possible alliance with the USSR. However, this was not seriously discussed until late 1960, after communist influence had already become dominant. In addition, Szulc convincingly argues that Castro was much too independent to have been influenced on the course of *his* revolution.¹¹

Another prevalent argument appears in Sebastian Balfour's biography, *Castro*, in which he argues that the U.S. pushed Cuba toward communism and dependence on the USSR. Balfour argues that Castro, though receptive to the ideology, was not a communist, but a nationalist and anti-imperialist in the vein of José Martí. However, following the victory of the revolution, Castro began to drift towards more radical ideologies as a result of U.S. influence on the island. The United States openly denounced Castro's revolution and refused to recognize the new government. However, tensions between the two countries came to a boil when U.S. oil companies in Cuba refused to refine crude oil received from the U.S.S.R.¹² At this, Castro declared that the industries would be nationalized. This attack on U.S. interests sent the U.S. into negotiations with Cuban exiles in Florida, who would eventually lead a U.S. funded attack on the new Cuban government. This invasion led to the declaration of the socialist nature of the

⁹ Farber, *Origins*, 156.

¹⁰ Raúl Castro and Ernesto "Che" Guevara were the only Marxist members of the movement. In addition, Che was very suspicious of the PSP and initially refused to work with them.

¹¹ Szulc, *Fidel*, 64.

¹² Sebastian Balfour, *Castro* (London: Longman Press, 1990), 68.

revolution, and as such, Balfour argues that the U.S.'s actions towards Cuba forced it to radicalize.¹³ Though this is the moment that coincides with the declaration of communism, the primary sources put forth the idea that Castro had decided on a communist path before this event, and simply used the Bay of Pigs invasion to finally profess it and further radicalize his revolution.

The most convincing argument put forth about the Cuban road to communism is addressed only briefly in Tad Szulc's book *Fidel: A Critical Portrait*. Szulc relates that the failed general strike, planned by the urban, more liberal wing of the Movimiento 26 de Julio, led to a rift between the liberal factions of the movement and the more radical factions.¹⁴ This rift led Castro to siding with the communists in his ranks and seeking allies outside of the movement who supported creating a completely new political system. It is this view that I believe the documents and writings of Fidel Castro before, during, and after the revolution support most closely.

Though Szulc addresses the most plausible *moment* that the shift towards communism occurred, he does not expound on why this occurred. This is precisely where I believe I make a contribution to the literature. This thesis seeks to offer a different interpretation of the Cuban path to communism. I argue that Castro's close study of the life and works of Martí, as well as Cuba's turbulent political history since its independence, led him to hold a radical nationalist and anti-imperialist ideology. Above all else, Castro wished to fulfill Martí's vision of an independent Cuba, which is what influenced him to take up arms against Batista in 1953 at the Moncada Barracks and again in 1956. Following a failed strike in 1958 organized by the liberal members of his movement, Castro sought ways to distance himself from those who wished to

¹³ Balfour, *Castro*, 77.

¹⁴ Szulc, *Fidel*, 48.

uphold the old political order following the revolution. To protect his Martíán vision of an independent Cuba, Castro chose a more radical path for the revolution to ensure that his vision was not compromised and that his proposed reforms could ultimately be implemented. This led to a close relationship with the PSP and eventually to the declaration of the Marxist nature of the revolution. This approach will contribute significantly to the ongoing debate on the subject by addressing both the factors that occurred during and after the revolution as well as Castro's significant influence from Cuban history.

Chapter One:

Martí and the Historical Roots of the Cuban Revolution, 1895-1952

Who was Fidel Castro's primary revolutionary role model and how was he convinced that revolution was the path that Cuba needed?

While it seems effortless to point to Karl Marx as the inspiration for the Cuban Revolution, especially after the fact, looking only to Marx ignores Cuban revolutionary history and perhaps the most influential figure in Cuban politics: José Martí. Going back to the War of Cuban Independence, Martí has served as a martyr for independence, a symbol of justice, and an ideologue of freedom to the Cuban people. His memory has been evoked in times of turmoil as well as peace in order to offer solutions to Cuba's problems. Understandably, like many other Cubans, Castro was not immune to Martí's power and was deeply influenced by him, adopting many of his ideas as his own.

This chapter seeks to argue that Castro's ideology was largely influenced by the nationalist and anti-imperialist ideas of Martí. To do this, a brief biography of Martí will be given, addressing his important role as a Cuban hero and analyzing his own ideology, which will be the basis of making future comparisons between Martí and Castro. Martí's importance to Cuban politics will then be highlighted, analyzing the misuse of his image by politicians in post-independence Cuba. Next, Castro's early life and birth into politics will be discussed, which began with his enrollment into the University of Havana, where he was first introduced to the ideas of Martí. Becoming engrossed in Martían ideology, Castro became disillusioned with the bastardization of Martí's message by politicians and began to see that there was no remedy for the corruption in Cuba within the prevailing political system. He reached the conclusion that an

armed revolution was necessary to create a truly independent Cuba as Martí had attempted more than 50 years earlier.

José Martí: Cuba's Founding Father

Martí has shaped the thinking of modern Cuba more so than any other statesman or thinker in its history.¹⁵ Though his most immediate claim to fame comes from his part in the Cuban War of Independence, Martí was primarily a man of words and ideas, not of weapons. The legacy that he left behind is one of revolution, nationalism, anti-imperialism, and advocacy for justice and equality. For these reasons, his memory has been embraced by every successive generation in Cuba in an effort to fulfill his vision of an independent Cuba.

José Martí was a first-generation Cuban, born of Spanish parents in 1853.¹⁶ Growing up under Spanish rule, he began to resent the crown after witnessing the oppressive measures it imposed on its citizens and after living through the Ten Years War, a failed independence struggle fought against the Spanish in 1868.¹⁷ At the age of sixteen, Martí was accused of treason after condemning new repressive measures on the island and sentenced to spend six years in prison on the Isle of Pines (though his sentence was commuted to exile in Spain instead).¹⁸ During his years of exile, he completed his education and developed his unique blend of idealism and nationalism, never wavering in his dedication to “*Cuba Libre*.” He returned to the Western Hemisphere in 1874, going first to Mexico, Guatemala, and finally to New York.¹⁹ In New York, Martí encountered a large group of progressive Cuban exiles who were, like himself, committed

¹⁵ Sheldon B. Liss, *Roots of Revolution: Radical Thought in Cuba* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 44.

¹⁶ Deborah Shnookal, ed., *José Martí Reader: Writings on the America* (Melbourne: Ocean Books, 2007), 13.

¹⁷ Shnookal, *Martí Reader*, 4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

to an independence movement against Spain. Though Martí soon left New York, this was the beginning of a revolutionary relationship between himself and the other Cubans residing there. Following years of promoting his cause of Cuban independence and an end to imperialism in general, he founded the Cuban Revolutionary Party in Key West, Florida in 1892, spearheading what would eventually be a victorious revolution against Spain.²⁰

Following the formation of the revolutionary party and its operation in New York and Key West, Martí began gathering support for an armed uprising against Spanish colonial rule. Martí looked to people of all social strata: from the lowest of peasant workers, especially those in the radical, eastern tip of the island (now the Oriente province), to capitalists and sugar growers who were tired of the Spanish interfering in their trade. When funds were secured and enough popular support was created on the island, plans were made to begin the struggle for independence. This struggle would begin in 1895, when Martí arrived in Playita, a town on the eastern tip of the island, with other Cuban exiles.²¹ Here, Martí was greeted by the Cuban generals who would assist him in his fight and was then named Major General of the Liberation Army.²² Martí was killed in the first battle of the war as he led the charge on the Spanish lines (some argue needlessly), instantly becoming a martyr of the independence movement. Though he was no longer there to fight, the Cuban Liberation Army rallied around his memory in an effort to avenge his death. Finally, after three long years of guerilla warfare and the entrance of the United States on the side of the Liberation forces, Cuba had secured its independence from Spain in 1898, Martí's vision of independence being realized.²³

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

²² *Ibid.*, 12.

²³ Aviva Chomsky, Barry Carr, and Maria Smorkaloff, eds., *The Cuba Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 143.

However, Martí was much more than just a symbol of the independence movement in Cuba. With his death, his writings and ideas, too, were immortalized in the minds of Cubans who used them not only to unite a scattered exile community prior to the War of Independence, but also to give hope to Cuban citizens of differing backgrounds years after his death. In his expansive writing and speaking career, Martí laid out his progressive, social-republican ideology and addressed countless social and political issues of his time, many of which remain relevant today.²⁴

Among Martí's most important contributions to Cuban revolutionary thought was his staunch advocacy of nationalism. Cuba and Latin America as a whole, he felt, were not merely extensions of Europe, but were their own independent nations with unique histories that should be embraced, not shied away from.²⁵ In one of his most famous works, "Our America," Martí emphasizes the differences between Latin America ("Our America") and Europe/North America ("Other America").²⁶ He argues that these differences did not make Latin America inferior, but in fact made their culture more unique and even superior. He stated that in order for "Our America" to progress, his fellow Latin Americans needed to understand themselves and their history, which would lead to *native* solutions to problems and rejecting *foreign* influence in their affairs.²⁷ As such, he rejected the examples of the American and French revolutions to solve Cuba's problems and sought to create distinctly *Cuban* revolutionary alternatives, chastising Cubans who ignored the unique needs of their homeland:²⁸

²⁴ Liss, *Roots of Revolution*, 45.

²⁵ Donald E. Rice, *The Rhetorical Uses of the Authorizing Figure: Fidel Castro and José Martí* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1992), 26.

²⁶ José Martí, "Our America," in *José Martí Reader: Writings on the Americas*, eds. Deborah Shnookal, and Mirta Muniz (Melbourne: Ocean Books, 2007), 128.

²⁷ Liss, *Roots of Revolution*, 50.

²⁸ Rice, *Rhetorical Uses*, 28.

Those without faith in their country are seven-month weaklings... Their puny arms – arms of Paris or Madrid – can barely reach the bottom limb, so they claim the tall tree unclimbable. The ships should be loaded with those harmful insects that gnaw at the bone of the country that nourishes them... Those born in America who are ashamed of the mother who reared them, because she wears an Indian apron; and those scoundrels who disown their sick mother, abandoning her on her sick bed!... These unbelievers in honor who drag that honor over foreign soil like their counterparts in the French Revolution with their dancing, their affections, their drawling speech!²⁹

Martí's nationalism was a cornerstone of the Cuban War of Independence and part of his appeal to the masses. He emphasized the role that the history of a country plays in governing it as well as changing it, making nationalism an integral factor to any *Cuban* solutions, revolutions or otherwise.

Another aspect of Martí's nationalism was anti-imperialism, especially in regards to the United States. Martí spent a great deal of his short life in America and understood its political system better than most foreigners. Being so knowledgeable on the subject, Martí feared the motives of Cuba's neighbor to the North in respect to Latin America, and especially to Cuba. Though the United States was an advocate of Cuban independence, Martí saw this position as opportunist, hypothesizing that the U.S goal was to either annex Cuba or, at the very least, dominate its economy, just as Spain had done.³⁰ As such, he opposed U.S. involvement in the

²⁹ Martí, "Our America," 121-22.

³⁰ José Martí, "The Truth About the United States," in *José Martí Reader*, 185.

War of Independence, stating, “[o]nce the United States is in Cuba, who will get it out?”³¹ He also felt that the United States had a plan to impose a protectorate on all of Latin America in order to exploit its countries and keep them subordinate to “Other America.”³² This Pan-American vision was diametrically opposed to Martí’s own Pan-American dream, which saw “Our America” uniting in an effort to oppose the tentacles of the United States.³³

However, though Martí’s Pan-American vision has never been fulfilled, many of his fears of U.S. imperialism in Cuba have been. Following the explosion of the USS Maine off the coast of Cuba in 1898, the United States saw fit to intervene in the Cuban War of Independence. After the end of the struggle, the United States conditioned its withdrawal from Cuba on the addition of the Platt Amendment in the Cuban Constitution, which – until its repeal in 1934 – would ensure that Cuba was dependent on the United States, stripping the young republic of any hopes it had of being a sovereign nation.³⁴ Disciples of Martí saw this as a mockery to his legacy, convincing some to take action against U.S. imperialism, though many others benefitted from it.

Although he has been embraced by the communist regime of Fidel Castro as a forefather of Communist Cuba, Martí was quite far from a communist himself. Throughout his prolific writing and speaking career, Martí put forth the notion of a Cuban Republic, especially in the Cuban Revolutionary Party’s declaration and “Manifesto of Montecristi.” The ideal form the Republic would take following independence would be a constitutional republic that was Cuban at its very root. He proposed forming local governments that avoided opportunism and were founded upon Cuban principles, stating:

³¹ Liss, *Roots of Revolution*, 50.

³² José Martí, *Inside the Monster: Writings on the United States and Imperialism*, ed. Phillip S. Foner (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 42.

³³ Martí, “Our America,” 120-29.

³⁴ See “The Platt Amendment.” Theodore Roosevelt, “The Platt Amendment” in *The Cuba Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, eds. Aviva Chomsky, Barry Carr, and Maria Smorkaloff (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 147-49.

Our country is to be constituted from its very roots with workable forms, grown in Cuba, in such a way that an inappropriate government may not end in favoritism or tyranny.³⁵

To this end, Martí favored governors who were not the most privileged and educated, but were instead those most educated in the political factors of their country.³⁶ Martí's republican vision also included racial equality, a necessary component to ensure not only a unified fighting force, but a unified Cuba.³⁷ Additionally, unlike many other radical thinkers of his time, Martí was pro-capital. Though he critiqued the United States' monopolies, protective tariffs, and treatment of workers, overall he agreed with the fundamentals of a free-market economy, so long as it worked for Cuba and not for a foreign nation.³⁸ Martí believed that capitalism was necessary for the Cuban Republic to prosper, proposing an economy based on populism and small land holders, much like what he believed existed in the majority of the United States.³⁹

Martí's ideal republic was never given a chance to take hold; with the realization of independence from Spain came dependence on and subordination to the United States. However, though his vision was not carried out, subsequent generations of Cubans inherited the passion to one day realize Martí's social-republican dream and create a truly independent Cuba.

Martí's political impact in Cuba cannot be overstated. Following the victory over Spain in the War of Independence, Cuba looked to Martí for answers when faced with problems of governance and influence from the United States. His nationalism was instilled in the population, giving the people pride to say that they were "Cuban" rather than Spanish. Politicians and intellectuals from both sides of the political spectrum clung to his ideas as their own, all of them

³⁵ Richard B. Gray, "José Martí and Social Revolution in Cuba," *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 5 (1963): 251.

³⁶ Rice, *Rhetorical Uses*, 28.

³⁷ José Martí, "Manifiesto of Montecristi," in *José Martí Reader*, 193.

³⁸ Liss, *Roots of Revolution*, 51.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

wishing to be recognized as the Apostle's disciples. However, following the War of Independence and the formation of the Cuban Republic, Cuba was in need of his guidance more than ever as corruption and oppression ran rampant once again. A new generation of revolutionaries would rise to combat this injustice by evoking the image of Martí, but would do so in vain.

Failure of Martíán Appeals: Machado, the Revolution of 1933, and Beyond

Following the war of independence and the domination of Cuba by the United States, Martí was evoked by many groups in Cuba on both sides of the political spectrum, however contradictory it might seem.⁴⁰ As a result, many began to lose sight of Martí's true revolutionary vision, which above all spoke of an independent Cuba and against U.S. imperialism. It is in this period that the rhetorical use of Martí to sanction political actions that were blatantly against his ideals was popularized, which co-opted his revolutionary message and forced him to endorse corruption and imperialism. This trend, which emerged in the era from 1902-1934, would remain prevalent for many years, which is precisely what Castro was reacting against when he gained political consciousness. This next section will serve as an overview of the political climate in Cuba following independence as it would have mattered to Castro, emphasizing the failed appeals to Martí.

This trend began with the increased involvement of the United States in Cuba following The Cuban War of Independence. Despite the wishes of Martí and many who fought in the Cuban Liberation Army, the United States had entered the struggle in April of the same year, though Spain had been all but routed by three years of intense guerilla war.⁴¹ Though victory had

⁴⁰ Sebastian Balfour, *Castro* (London: Longman Press, 1990), 29.

⁴¹ Chomsky et al., *The Cuba Reader*, 144.

been secured for Cuba, independence as Martí had envisioned was no longer an option to them. In the time it took for Cuba to draft its first constitution, the United States installed a military government to promote stability. This unpopular occupation lasted until 1902, when the Cuban Republic was born, but under the shadow of the U.S.⁴² As a condition of the termination of U.S. military presence in Cuba, the young republic was forced to include the Platt Amendment in their constitution. This document sealed the fate of the island as a colonial holding of the United States, stating:

I. That the government of Cuba shall never enter into any treaty or other compact with any foreign power which will impair... the independence of Cuba...

III. That the government of Cuba consents that the United States may exercise the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence [and] the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty.⁴³

These two articles negated the sovereignty of the Cuban Republic, allowing the U.S. to legally control their government and the future of Cuba.

Although the circumstances of their independence was not what Martí had wished for the nation, many of the new Cuban officials (most of whom had served in the Liberation Army) hid behind the façade of being nationalists in the Martían sense, but allowed the political situation that existed on the island to enrich them.⁴⁴ Their needs to keep U.S. interests satisfied confined their aspirations to battling for political power and wealth through corruption and investment in

⁴² Jules Robert Benjamin, *The United States and Cuba: Hegemony and Dependent Development, 1880-1934* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977), 7.

⁴³ Roosevelt, "The Platt Amendment," 147-48.

⁴⁴ Benjamin, *United States and Cuba*, 21.

U.S. business rather than in Martíán reforms.⁴⁵ The educational system, welfare system, and fair economic system that Martí had dreamt of became a distant memory and an unfulfilled promise. Racial equality, which had been a large goal of the War of Independence, was abandoned due to the presence of the United States, who imposed their racism on the white Cuban elites.⁴⁶ To this end, Afro-Cubans, who made up 85 percent of the fighting force in the war for independence, formed *El Partido Independiente de Color* (The Independent Party of Color) to remind the government of Martí's aspirations.⁴⁷ However, their appeals to Martí and equality were unheard by Cuban officials and were met with repression and yet another U.S. military occupation, the second of three that would occur between 1902-1934.⁴⁸

Politics in Cuba continued much this fashion until the 1924 election. In the years leading up to the election, Cubans continued to grow wearier of U.S. influence, and as a result, nationalism came to the forefront of politics once more. Riding the wave of the newly resurgent nationalism was Gerardo Machado, a member of the Liberal Party who ran on a campaign of nationalism and reform (albeit not substantial in scope).⁴⁹ Machado's popularity among the lower classes and his appeals to Martí made the U.S. suspicious of the Liberal Party and Machado himself. Upon his election, however, Machado made it abundantly clear that he would be a friend to the U.S. and their interests in Cuba. This amicable relationship with U.S. investors in Cuba made Machado's government quite popular among the U.S. government, some even hoping that "the Cuban people would find a way to keep Machado in office indefinitely."⁵⁰ By 1928, Machado began petitioning congress to allow him to stay in office longer. Though they

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁷ El Partido Independiente de Color, "The Independent Party of Color," in *The Cuba Reader*, 163.

⁴⁸ U.S. military interventions in Cuba: 1906-1909, 1912, 1917-1920. See Chomsky et al., *The Cuba Reader*, 143.

⁴⁹ Benjamin, *United States and Cuba*, 50.

⁵⁰ Robert Freeman Smith, *The United States and Cuba: Business and Diplomacy, 1917-1960* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1960).

were not receptive at first, Machado persuaded them with his idea of *coopertivismo*, which stated that if congress and he could cooperate and monopolize the political structure, they *could* stay in power indefinitely.⁵¹ Congress extended his presidency for one more term, also extending the length of the term from four years to six.⁵² The United States quickly condoned the decisions of the Cuban Congress. Whatever belief Machado ever had in Martí's ideals was now lost as he paved the way for more imperialism and corruption. From a supposed believer in Martí's vision to an illegitimate dictator, Machado displayed that Cuba had lost sight of the *true* ideals of Martí.

Opposition to the regime began mounting when congress did away with the constitution and deemed it legal for Machado to run for reelection. However, coupled with the repression as a result of the Great Depression in Cuba, a vast array of the population began to vocalize their distaste for the regime.⁵³ Perhaps the most vocal and active opponent to Machado was the student movement from the University of Havana. A bastion of liberal thought, many students at the university were strongly opposed to the repression and illegality of Machado's time in power. One particular student leader, Julio Antonio Mella, advocated strongly for a revolution to save Cuba from Machado and "Yankee imperialism," making overt appeals to Martí in his writings.⁵⁴ This outspoken, leftist student movement's main goal was to put the ideas of Martí into practice after decades of ignoring his message, which was also true of many of the other opposition groups.⁵⁵ However, these different groups differed significantly in their ideas to remove Machado and establish a new republic. Despite these differences, on August 5th, 1933 a general strike coupled with an army revolt overthrew Machado's regime.⁵⁶ Though the opposition was

⁵¹ Rolando E. Bonachea and Nelson P. Valdes, eds., *Revolutionary Struggle: 1947-1958, vol. 1 of the Selected Works of Fidel Castro* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972), 8.

⁵² Benjamin, *United States and Cuba*, 52.

⁵³ See Benjamin, *United States and Cuba*, 53-65 for more information on the different Machado opposition groups.

⁵⁴ Julio Antonio Mella, "Where is Cuba Headed?" in *The Cuba Reader*, 265-69.

⁵⁵ Tad Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait* (New York: William Morrow and Company, inc., 1986), 125.

⁵⁶ Bonachea and Valdes, *Revolutionary Struggle*, 10.

successful in overthrowing Machado, the revolutionaries and dissenters were now divided on what was desired from a post-revolutionary government.

Following the removal of Machado from power, the U.S. installed a de facto center-right government to control the island while tensions calmed. This government was short lived, however, due to the lack of support and the tumultuous situation that still existed in the country. The new government fell in September to a coup d'état led by Fulgencio Batista, a non-commissioned officer who was upset with the officers taking the side of the new government.⁵⁷ This coup would implement a new government, and due to popular support, the radical ideas of Martí were put into power when Ramón Grau San Martín was named provisional president.⁵⁸ Being very aware of the rising nationalism and ideas of Martí, Grau set out to create a republic that would improve social conditions in Cuba and push to repeal the Platt Amendment.⁵⁹ However, the government's power was limited by the continuation of fighting in the East and the lack of consensus within the government from right and the moderate-left officials. The U.S., who refused to recognize the government of Grau, began making concessions to Batista in hopes that he could overthrow the government once again.⁶⁰ On January 14, Batista successfully overthrew the regime. He would be in control of Cuba through puppet presidents or ruling himself for years to come.⁶¹

A new era of conservative politics was born following the overthrow of Grau. Though the U.S. agreed to repeal the Platt Amendment, the new government of Cuba ensured that the U.S. would have the final say in the Cuban market.⁶² Though opposition to the government was still

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Grau was chosen due to his outspoken distaste for Machado and his moderate political views. See Bonachea and Valdes, *Revolutionary Struggle*, 11.

⁵⁹ Szulc, *Fidel*, 126.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Bonachea and Valdes, *Revolutionary Struggle*, 13.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 13-14.

quite present, the small sizes and the vast number of opposition groups with no semblance of unity among them rendered them powerless.⁶³ These groups became no more than gangsters with guns, hiding behind the messages of Martí and nationalism, but only out for personal gain and destruction. Appealing to Martí had become something that all politicians and dissidents did in an attempt to legitimize themselves and gain popular support. It meant nothing if Batista used a Martí quote in a speech other than to unconsciously remind Cuba of how lost his vision was. When Grau partook in the election of 1940, though he ran on a similar platform, he did nothing but legitimize the power that Batista had over the country.⁶⁴ With the last viable politician that would act on Martí's behalf compromised, there was little hope for change in Cuba. It is this period that Castro was born into. Through observing the corruption and blatant misuse of Martí's memory, he was influenced to fight for change one way or another.

Castro's Political Awakening and Influence from Martí

Fidel Castro's early life and introduction to the populist politics of Cuba and is a crucial of how this revolutionary adopted his Martían ideology. Beginning with his enrollment into the University of Havana as a law student at the age of 18, Castro became involved in student activism, which was his introduction to the ideas of Martí.⁶⁵ Through observing the corruption and gangsterism that was present throughout this period, Castro became convinced that no remedy for the corruption in Cuba existed within the prevailing political system, and as such, he began to search for solutions to this widespread problem. Above all, Castro's main political goal was to fulfill Martí's revolutionary vision and create a truly independent Cuba. He realized that the only way this could be done was through armed revolution.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶⁵ Balfour, *Castro*, 32.

Fidel Alejandro Castro Ruz was born on August 13, 1926 to a Spanish immigrant and a woman of humble backgrounds in Birán, Cuba, a town in the Oriente province of Cuba. Before Fidel was born, his father, Angel Castro, had acquired quite a large landholding, converting what was once a sharecropping operation in the mountains of Oriente to a profitable farm. Fidel enjoyed a carefree upbringing in a family that was quite well-off compared to their neighbors, caring much more for horseplay and exploring than doing his chores. As he and his siblings reached high school age, they were sent to the Belén College, a Jesuit institution in Havana to receive a well-rounded education they could not receive at home in Birán.⁶⁶ Though Castro would excel in his studies at Belén, he was much more interested in playing sports than in studying Cuban history or politics. He was, however, quite fascinated by the writings of José Martí, though it is not clear that he grasped their true importance yet. In addition, he was a gifted public speaker and was quite capable of exciting his audiences through his words. In fact, many at the school compared his abilities to Eduardo Chibás, a previous graduate of Belén who had gone on to become an important politician in the fight against corruption.⁶⁷

Despite this early connection with Chibás, someone who would soon be so influential in his life, Castro was “politically illiterate” until the age of 18.⁶⁸ At this time, in 1945, Castro was admitted into the University of Havana to study law. As a new comer to city life (Belén was in the countryside outside the city), Castro was plunged into a world that was unfamiliar to him. Perhaps more so than anything, he was not familiar with the political climate in Cuba. The previous decade had seen the fall of a dictator and the rise of an illegitimate political structure following the coup d'état of Batista. This illegitimacy created rampant corruption among politicians in Cuba and, though he was not always ruling directly, Batista was calling all of the

⁶⁶ Szulc, 118.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁶⁸ Balfour, *Castro*, 22.

shots. The 1944 election saw the rise of the man who had assumed the role of president following the victory of the 1933 revolution, Ramón Grau San Martín.⁶⁹ Following his loss of power to Batista in 1934, Grau had been trying to get back into political office by running in the subsequent elections following his removal. In order to meet this end, Grau had formed the *Auténtico* party, which claimed to be the *authentic* heirs of Martí's revolutionary vision.⁷⁰ However, though he made this claim, Grau had been consistently moving to the right in his political ideology and no longer even remotely resembled the politician as he once had. As a result, his *Auténtico* regime was just as corrupt and opportunist as Batista's.

Castro's entrance into University life coincided with the beginning of Grau's presidency, which saw no improvements or reforms like he had introduced during his 1933-1934 reign. Instead, corruption was obvious and political violence was prevalent throughout Havana, especially at the University. The same student groups who had battled so hard for the removal of Machado still roamed the streets in one form or another and claimed to be revolutionary. However, instead of offering ideas and solutions, they offered bullets and engaged in crime. With the beginning of Grau's reign, these groups and their "gangsterism" made the university a very dangerous place and forced most students to either side with a particular group or to be constantly watching their backs.⁷¹ In this period, Castro was always armed in case he had a less than agreeable run-in with one of these groups.

The University of Havana was a self-governing entity at that time, which meant that neither the army nor the police could set foot on the campus, and as such, student politics was a very important aspect of University life. The primary governing body of the University was the University Students Federation (FEU), which was made up of several delegates from each class

⁶⁹ Szulc, *Fidel*, 136.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 137-38.

and school in the University, presidents of each of the 13 schools, and a president of the FEU.⁷² If students were not members of the FEU, they most certainly either associated with a gangster group or conventional political party. In general, the FEU was a great way for politically-minded students to make a name for themselves in Havana. It also served as a battleground for gangs to assert their dominance. Being quite eager to find a place for himself at the University and having a knack for public speaking, Fidel Castro sought to become a delegate for his law school class in the 1945 election. While many were impressed by his charisma and upside as a leader, Castro received little support in the FEU because those voting saw him as being too difficult to control, which was not ideal of a first-year delegate.⁷³ Nevertheless, the experience made many people at the university aware of Castro's potential, and as such, he began to be approached by many groups, both political and gang related.

It is at this time in Castro's life that he begins to develop his political consciousness. Following the FEU elections in 1945, Castro was approached by both the *Auténtico* and Cuban Communist Party to recruit his membership.⁷⁴ However, Castro refused to consider joining either, likely because the party line of the communists would not allow him any individuality, and he had already deduced that the *Auténtico* party was as corrupt as Grau and stood for nothing but personal gain. However, he was also approached by the two most prevalent "revolutionary" gangs at the university: the Socialist Revolutionary Movement (MSR), who currently ran the FEU, and the Insurrectionist Revolutionary Union (UIR), who's one goal was to rid the campus of "assassins."⁷⁵ Though Castro wanted no part of the gangsterism that plagued the campus, he saw no option but to at least make concessions to both sides in order to secure his safety and help

⁷² *Ibid.*, 138

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁷⁵ "Assassins" was supposedly a reference to the MSR. See Szulc, *Fidel*, 143.

inaugurate his political career.⁷⁶ He was, however, influenced to take a closer look at the life and works of Martí by observing the appeals made by the populist gangster groups, as well as by observing how the Grau regime used Martí's memory. In doing so, it would have become apparent to Castro that these groups were doing no more than appealing to Martí as a tool to garner support, using his message and twisting it for their own advances. It is at this time that Castro became more aware of the use of Martí's image by groups who had no ideological connection to him, as had been done in the Machado era.

Castro's study of Martí and distaste for the corruption of the Grau regime and the violence of the gangster groups was evident in his first political undertaking outside of the FEU. In the spring of 1946, Grau, in an attempt to halt the gang activity in Havana, made concessions to both the MSR and the UIR by offering both groups positions in the police force, including Chief of Police and Director of the National Police Academy.⁷⁷ By doing this, Grau not only did not halt the gangster violence, but he made it exponentially worse by corrupting the police into being used for the gangs' interests. Castro was outraged at this and sought a way to let his views on the matter be heard. Through his activity in the newly formed Anti-Imperialist League on campus, which he used to crusade for the nationalist ideals of Martí and against U.S. imperialism in Cuba and all of Latin America, Castro made a name for himself and was invited to speak at the 75th anniversary of the execution of eight university students at the hand of the Spanish for promoting independence.⁷⁸ After paying respects to the dead, Castro took it upon himself to critique Grau for his connection to corruption and gang activities, as well as his plans to seek reelection in 1948. Castro called for Cubans to be morally offended that this man even uttered

⁷⁶ Many are of the viewpoint that Castro *did*, in fact, involve himself in gangster activities with the UIR. See Bonachea and Valdes, *Revolutionary Struggle*, 16-31.

⁷⁷ Szulc, *Fidel*, 143.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 145.

his party's name in the same breath as Martí and attacked him for "tolerance [of] ministers who steal public funds and... the gangs that invade the inner circles of the government."⁷⁹ By attacking both the gang situation and the Grau government, Castro made a name for himself in Cuba as a vocal advocate against injustice and for the ideals of Martí. Additionally, he had now fully embraced Martí's populist form of speechmaking, to which he would stay true throughout his career. It can be said at this time that Castro's use of Martí in his speeches and writings served a similar rhetorical purpose as the use of Martí by those he was attempting to discredit. However, Castro's populism was much more rooted in Cuban history and a profound desire to fulfill Martí's vision of an independent Cuba.⁸⁰ As time went on, he only became more effective at evoking the Apostle.

Castro's political reputation continued to grow in Cuba throughout 1946 and 1947, as he became a well-known critic of the Grau administration. With the publication of a declaration against Grau seeking reelection, in which he pledged to fight the reelection of Grau "even if the price [he] has to pay in the struggle is [his] own death," Castro reached the height of his popularity up to that time.⁸¹ As a result, he was invited by Eduardo Chibás, the legend of Belén College, to a meeting to mark the formation of a radical new political party that opposed the *Auténticos*. With this meeting, held on May 15, 1947, the Cuban People's Party (PPC) was born.⁸² The party began to be referred to as the *Ortodoxo* party, as they represented orthodoxy of their dedication to the ideals of Martí.⁸³ With Castro's new status as a founder of the PPC, he saw bright prospects of a long-term political career and a real possibility to create change in

⁷⁹ Fidel Castro quoted in Szulc, 146.

⁸⁰ Szulc, *Fidel*, 152-153.

⁸¹ Fidel Castro, "Against the Reelection of Ramón Grau San Martín" in *Revolutionary Struggle: 1947-1958, vol. 1 of the Selected Works of Fidel Castro*, eds. Rolando E. Bonachea and Nelson P. Valdes (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972), 131-32.

⁸² Szulc, *Fidel*, 147.

⁸³ From here on out, the party will be referred to as *Ortodoxo* and PPC interchangeably.

Cuba. In addition, his new party affiliation allowed him to distance himself from the communist party in Cuba, as Chibás was staunchly anti-communist, seeing them as opportunist and corrupt. Through the party, Castro began campaigning hard for Chibás' presidential election versus the much-hated Grau, immersing himself in functioning within the existing political system. However, in order to fulfill his dedication to Martí, Castro formed *Ortodoxo* Radical Action (ARO), a youth group of the PPC that advocated the idea of revolution as a means to correct the current political system.⁸⁴ He was, however, still convinced that change could come from within the existing political system at this point.

Following the formation of the PPC, Castro came to embrace Martí as an inspiration more than ever. His subsequent speeches contained many more appeals to nationalism, anti-imperialism, and armed revolution to correct political betrayals by Grau and other “false leaders.”⁸⁵ He also sought to embrace Martí's speaking style by listening to his speeches over and over again. With his newfound inspiration, support from a legitimate party, and confrontational attitude, Castro began making more serious claims against Grau and the university gangs. As a result, he received threats from these parties, stating that if he did not desist or leave the university altogether, he would be killed.⁸⁶ Though he did not abandon speaking or the university altogether, he did tread lighter and take necessary precautions to ensure his safety. As such, when he was given the chance to leave the country in 1948 to attend a conference in Colombia, he agreed immediately.

In the midst of the gang violence and the threats to his well-being, Castro and his closest allies were approached by Juan Perón, the leader of Argentina, to create the Latin American

⁸⁴ ARO was by no means planning a revolution at this time. See Szulc, *Fidel*, 150.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 152-53.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 154.

Student Association.⁸⁷ The goal of this association was to create a coalition between students in all Latin American countries that possessed nationalist and anti-imperialist views. Perón, impressed with Castro's nationalist views, saw the University of Havana as a great place to begin his project. To jumpstart the association, Perón wished to disrupt the Ninth Inter-American Conference, which was being held in Bogotá, Colombia.⁸⁸ In order to do this, he wished for the new Student Association to stage protests and demonstrations at the conference and advocate against U.S. colonialism in Latin America.⁸⁹ Castro and his fellow students arrived in Bogotá on March 31, 1948 and began making preparations for the student meeting. At the start of the conference, the students association had quite an impact, disrupting many events and even incited popular support in favor of the students. However, on April 9th, the leader of the Colombian Liberal Party, Jorge E. Gaitán, was assassinated moments before he was to speak at the congress.⁹⁰ With news of his death, the people of Bogotá reacted violently against the conference and the Colombian government itself, causing a short-lived revolution in the city. Seeing the intensity of the people in Bogotá greatly impacted Castro and he took part in the revolt. Though the *Bogotázo*, as it is now called, made no real progress in changing the political structure in Colombia, Castro was baptized as a revolutionary that day.⁹¹ Though he had already flirted with the idea of armed revolution to create change in Cuba, he was now intrigued to find out if a popular revolution could take hold in Cuba. In addition, he had a very valuable lesson reaffirmed that day, which Martí had emphasized: disorganized revolutions will never prevail.

Later that same year, Carlos Prío Socarrás, a member of the *Auténtico* party, would be elected president and the corruption and gang violence continued at an all-time high. Though

⁸⁷ Bonachea and Valdes, *Revolutionary Struggle*, 24.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁸⁹ For a detailed list of the goals of the conference, see Bonachea and Valdes, *Revolutionary Struggle*, 25.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁹¹ Szulc, *Fidel*, 180.

Castro continued to lay low politically, he remained an active member of the *Ortodoxo* party while he completed his law degree, campaigning hard for Chibás, who was preparing to run for office again in 1952. Chibás asserted himself as the front-runner by early 1951, displaying outright that the majority of Cubans were tired of corruption and exploitation. Through Chibás' radio show, he was able to reach the population daily and alert them of the corruption, making many appeals to nationalism and Martí in the process. However, in the summer of 1951, Chibás made sweeping allegations about Prío and his administration's corruption. When asked for proof, he was able to supply it, but not in the amount that he would have liked; this to him was an utter failure. On August 5, 1951, Chibás came on the air in order to assert that he knew his allegations were true, but in the process called his followers to act:

Cuba needs to wake up. But my wake up call was not, perhaps, loud enough...
 Comrades of Orthodoxy, let us move forward! For economic independence,
 political freedom, and social justice! Sweep the thieves from the government!
 People of Cuba, rise up, and move forward! People of Cuba, wake up! This is my
 last call!⁹²

Moments after he finished his speech, Chibás shot himself on the air.

Following the death of his mentor and Cuba's last best hope for change, Castro became disillusioned with the political process. Through he continued to fight for *Ortodoxo* candidates running for office and even continued to make speeches denouncing the government and offering *legal* solutions to removing Prío from office, his faith in the current political apparatus was meager at best.⁹³ In this time of struggle, Castro turned more toward Martí's words than he ever had and took it upon himself to create a revolution to fulfill Martí's vision once and for all.

⁹² Eduardo Chibás, "The Last Call" in *The Cuba Reader*, 299.

⁹³ See Fidel Castro, "I Accuse" in *Revolutionary Struggle*, 136-43.

Though he was not sure initially when he would begin this movement, on March 10, 1952 Fulgencio Batista returned to Cuba to ensure against an *Ortodoxo* victory in that year's election by taking over the government once again and placing himself as president. By March 11th, Castro had his plans in motion

* * *

While Fidel Castro and José Martí knew two very different Cubas, their goals of changing it and how to go about it were exceptionally similar. Through Castro's study of Martí, he not only learned the importance of nationalism, anti-imperialism, and unity, he gained a greater knowledge of the importance of Cuban solutions to Cuban problems. By 1952, it can be said that Castro had certainly been exposed to and studied the ideas of Karl Marx, but when it came to his own ideology, he looked to Martí and his disciples for guidance. While several have argued otherwise, it is unfounded to state that at any time prior to Batista's 1952 coup Castro was anything other than a radical nationalist, anti-imperialist, and advocate of social justice, just as Martí had been. Castro had learned from the failed revolution against Machado in 1933, he had learned from people claiming to be working towards Martíán reforms but instead choose to enrich themselves at the expense of Cubans, and he had learned that nothing could be done to reform Cuba within the existing political system. This created in Castro and other like-minded Cubans a revolutionary spirit that was kept alive by a psychological need to fulfill Martí's vision for Cuba.⁹⁴ In the period beyond 1952, Castro would only strive to be more like Martí, and the parallels between the two would become astonishing.

⁹⁴ Benjamin, *United States and Cuba*, 12.

Chapter Two:

Revolution, Falling Out, and Change in Course, 1952-1959

Given Fidel Castro's nationalist stance and his devotion to the ideals of José Martí, at what moment did communism begin to influence the course of the revolution?

Throughout his time as a student politician, Castro frequently associated with known Marxists. However, he never joined any communist organizations or wrote or said anything that would allude to his having Marxist tendencies. On the contrary, Castro pursued the path of normal politics, being a founding member of the *Ortodoxo* party, which was vehemently anti-communist. Castro was drawn to the Martían allure of the *Ortodoxo* party and their dedication to upholding Martí's vision of an independent Cuba. More importantly, following Fulgencio Batista's coup d'état in March of 1952, Castro realized that an armed revolution was necessary to create a truly independent Cuba and sought to create such a revolution by using the *Ortodoxo* party as his base of support rather than the more revolutionary minded Partido Socialista Popular (PSP, the Cuban communist party).⁹⁵ From the attack on the Moncada Barracks in 1953 to the military victory of Castro's revolutionary movement over the Batista regime, that remained the case.

This chapter will depict the formation of Fidel Castro's revolutionary movement and his revolutionary strategy, identifying José Martí as the intellectual author of both the attack on the Moncada Barracks and the Cuban Revolutionary War and arguing that his devotion to Martí drove the struggle. However, towards the end of the revolutionary war, the PSP became involved in the revolution, forging a relationship with Castro's revolutionary movement which would endure far beyond the war. Though the precise moment at which Castro became more receptive

⁹⁵ In fact, the PSP discredited Castro's efforts as being "adventurist" and "petit bourgeois." See Szulc, *Fidel*, 290.

to communist influence is difficult to determine, this chapter will argue that the ideological differences and vast distances between Castro's guerrillas in the Sierra Maestro and the more liberal factions in the cities led to a rift within the revolutionary movement and saw the beginning of a relationship between Castro and the PSP in 1958. It will be argued, however, that this move was not a sign of a shift in Castro's ideology from radical Martían nationalism to Marxism, but rather the birth of a strategic relationship to ensure that the liberal elements in the urban faction could not co-opt his revolutionary vision by suggesting a return to the old political order, which had allowed for so much corruption. This is why he sought the more radical support of the PSP.

Moncada and the Formation of a Martían Revolutionary Movement, 1952-1956

Following the suicide of Eduardo Chibás, Fidel Castro and many other young *Ortodoxos* were devastated by the loss of Cuba's most prolific voice of freedom and equality since Martí. As a result of this loss, many members of the *Ortodoxo* party were radicalized and more willing than ever to support the idea of a revolution to change the social order. This radicalization was further instilled in young Cubans (especially Castro) with the coup d'état of Fulgencio Batista in 1952.

With the coming elections of 1952, even with the voice of Chibás having been silenced, the *Ortodoxos* and their radicalized membership were emerging as front runners in the election.⁹⁶ Realizing this, many conservative forces in the military and producing classes began pitching for the return of Fulgencio Batista, the former general who had already conducted two successful coups.⁹⁷ Arriving in Cuba from his home in Florida in March, Batista and his men began to

⁹⁶ Szulc, *Fidel*, 207.

⁹⁷ Bonachea and Valdes, *Revolutionary Struggle*, 31-32.

orchestrate the process. By March 10, 1952, the plan was hatched and Batista overtook Camp Columbia, a major military stronghold. Within an hour, he controlled the majority of army bases around the island, forcing President Prío to take refuge in the Mexican embassy.⁹⁸ This marked the end of constitutional rule in Cuba, replacing a corrupt “democracy” with an equally corrupt dictatorship. With this news, Castro began eagerly plotting his revenge on the tyrant Batista.

Castro had made up his mind that not only was an armed revolution necessary to create an independent Cuba, but that there was now no alternative course of action following the Batista coup. He began working to build up support for a movement that would eventually lead an armed revolution against Batista. In order to do this, he looked to his friends and brothers in orthodoxy, the *Ortodoxo* Radical Action (ARO) and the *Ortodoxo* party. Here, he could be sure that he would find revolutionary-minded individuals like himself who were devoted to the ideas of Martí. Within two months, Castro had met Abel Santamaría, a car salesman at a Pontiac dealership near Castro’s small law office and an *Ortodoxo* radical.⁹⁹ Sharing Martí’s ideas and devotion to realizing his true revolutionary vision, the two formed an instant bond. What drew the two together even more, perhaps, was their shared belief that Cuba’s problems “could only be solved by fighting.”¹⁰⁰ Upon their meeting, Castro and Santamaría began meeting almost every day at Abel’s apartment, which he shared with his sister and fellow revolutionary, Haydée Santamaría.

Here, at the Santamaría apartment, is where the movement really began to take shape. Every night, more recruits who were interested in Martí and revolution were assembled, the vast majority of whom were from the *Ortodoxo* party.¹⁰¹ At these meetings, a range of issues were

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁹⁹ Szulc, *Fidel*, 225.

¹⁰⁰ Carlos Franqui, *Diary of the Cuban Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1980), 50.

¹⁰¹ Franqui, *Diary*, 50-51.

discussed, but most importantly, people came to hear both Castro and Santamaría speak about revolution and the tyranny of the Batista regime. In the months that followed, the meetings became more frequent and structured as the movement began to take shape and increase in numbers. In September 1952, with the addition of Pedro Miret, an engineering student and arms expert, the movement gained a brilliant military mind which would serve quite useful in preparing them for armed combat.¹⁰² It was at this time that the group began to engage in exercises to prepare for a coming conflict with the Batista regime. Time was arranged at shooting ranges all around Havana where the movement could train with their weapons. In addition, the structure of the movement became more military-like and strict, enforcing revolutionary discipline on all members of the movement. Conferences between Castro and Santamaría were held weekly to discuss the potential of members and whether or not a member should be removed.

By the end of 1952, there were cells of the movement all over Havana and to the East in the Oriente province. Training the movement for conflict was now occurring almost every day and the structure and nationalist ideology of the group was finally solidified. In addition, in order to protect the group's safety, members were now banned from attending demonstrations against the regime. Though the movement strove for secrecy and discipline in its ranks, the centennial celebration of Martí's birth was too symbolic and too momentous an occasion for Castro and his Martían revolutionary movement to not attend.¹⁰³ On January 28, 1953, to compete with Batista's celebration at the National Capital, the university organized a demonstration against the regime by way of a huge torchlight parade.¹⁰⁴ Castro decided that this would be the perfect time to unveil his clandestine army to the public, for Cuba needed to be reminded that Martí's

¹⁰² Szulc, *Fidel*, 229.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 237.

memory was one of revolution, and Castro felt the need to be the one to remind them. Showing up to the event with an impressive contingent of more than 600 people, the movement marched in columns through the street chanting “*Revolución! Revolución! Revolución!*”¹⁰⁵ Crowds observing the event commented, “There are the communists,” discounting the group and unaware that they were actually witnessing an organized revolutionary movement with military training.¹⁰⁶ Following this heroic display of his numbers to unknowing authorities and civilians alike, Castro remained in the public view throughout the month of February, taking opportunities to denounce the regime in newspapers and publically.¹⁰⁷ However, following charges against him in March for dissent, Castro brought himself back into seclusion for the sake of his movement.¹⁰⁸ Nonetheless, the early months of 1953 were a landmark for the movement. Not only did the regime witness a display of strength against them, but the display made the public aware that there was a movement that could potentially take on the regime that they could support. In addition, the centennial celebration also marked a shift into the second phase of the movement, which was the transition from mere recruitment to planning an actual attack on the regime.

Feeling confident enough in the numbers of the movement (Pedro Miret reported having trained between 1,300-1,400 people), Castro and Santamaría began making preparations for an attack on the regime in February 1953.¹⁰⁹ It had been devised by Castro sometime in late 1952 to attack a military base, finally settling on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba. The choice of Moncada was strategic to Fidel for three reasons. One, it was in the Oriente province, which was quite close in proximity to many of the movement’s current cells and was located in an area

¹⁰⁵ Franqui, *Diary*, 52.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Castro denounces the police for breaking in and destroying a well-known sculptor’s works, among them a bust of Martí. It is also hinted that the regime disappeared the man. See “The Studio of Sculptor Fidalgo Has Been Destroyed” in *Revolutionary Struggle*, 154-55.

¹⁰⁸ Szulc, *Fidel*, 238.

¹⁰⁹ Bonachea and Valdes, *Revolutionary Struggle*, 47.

that was, traditionally, more radical. This meant that with a successful attack, the barracks would act as a headquarters for the movement and become the hub of revolutionary activity. Two, Moncada was the second largest arms depot in Cuba. This was especially important to Castro because the movement had no funds to purchase more weapons, which meant it had no hope of sustaining a struggle against Batista without obtaining more. The easy solution to this dilemma seemed to be to capture weapons from the enemy. Additionally, Martí's revolutionary movement had also armed themselves by taking arms from the Spanish, a fact which provided historical justification to this tactic. The third reason Moncada was chosen was, again, related to its location. Oriente was where all Cuban revolutionary activity had operated out of in the previous two independence struggles. With Castro and Santamaría both being so rooted in Cuban revolutionary history and wanting to follow in Martí's footsteps, the attack *had* to be on Moncada.

With the location decided, Castro and Santamaría needed to iron out the rest of the details of the attack, which was done without the knowledge of the rest of the movement to ensure secrecy. The attack was to be conducted by a small contingent of the movement, using only the most trusted members for the attack. As Raúl Castro related *ex post facto*, capturing Moncada would be "the small engine... which, in our hands, would set in motion the big engine, which would be the nation fighting with the weapons we would have seized."¹¹⁰ Though it was only acting as "the small engine," every detail of Moncada had to be perfect. By March, the training of the movement was accelerated greatly, the rebels practicing wherever and whenever they could. What few funds the movement had were used for the purchase of .22 caliber sports rifles, which were relatively easy to get a hold of, and army uniforms.¹¹¹ With Moncada as the chosen

¹¹⁰ Raúl Castro quoted in Szulc, *Fidel*, 243.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 245.

target, Castro made many trips down to the barracks to study the layout and the surrounding areas thoroughly, making note of a nearby courthouse, military hospital, and a separate, yet smaller, military base in Bayamo. On a trip to Santiago in May, Castro instructed a movement member to purchase a farm near Siboney Beach, about 10 miles from Moncada, to use as a movement headquarters as the attack drew nearer.¹¹² After securing the farm, Castro began shipping weapons, ammunition, and food to the farm in order to prepare the farm for the coming attack. Santamaría was instructed to move into the farm in June to secure the final preparations for the movement's arrival.¹¹³ By this time, Castro and Santamaría had decided that the attack would occur early in the morning on Sunday, July 26, being the day after a carnival celebration in Santiago, which led to a good chance of the soldiers at Moncada being asleep and hung-over (another tactic borrowed from Martí's revolutionary legacy).¹¹⁴ Only four others in the whole movement would know the location and time of the attack until the day before.

On July 24th, the attackers were given word to travel to Santiago de Cuba, though their final destination at the farm was still withheld for security reasons. By the morning of the 25th, all members of the movement had arrived at the farm near Moncada and began prepping themselves for the struggle that was to occur in one day's time. On the 25th, the men were addressed by Castro and made aware of the plan for the attack. Of the 135 of them at the farm, 30 of them were to attack Bayamo, eight of them, led by Raúl Castro, were to take the court house, and 21, led by Abel Santamaría, were assigned to man the military hospital near Moncada.¹¹⁵ The rest of the men were to follow Castro into the military barracks at Moncada, where they would subdue the soldiers by force, secure the arms held at the base, and broadcast to

¹¹² Bonachea and Valdes, *Revolutionary Struggle*, 47-48.

¹¹³ Szulc, *Fidel*, 246.

¹¹⁴ Franqui, *Diary*, 57.

¹¹⁵ Bonachea and Valdes, *Revolutionary Struggle*, 50.

the people of Cuba their revolutionary program, followed by a loop of Eduardo Chibás' last speech in order to call the people of Cuba into action against the regime. After a successful assault, the men planned to retreat to the nearby Sierra Maestra Mountains and mount a guerrilla war against their adversaries, just as Martí had done in 1895.

The revolutionary program, which never reached the Cuban people due to the failure of the attack, offered to Cuba a nine point plan that sought to create a revolution towards the ideals of Martí. Throughout the program, the use of Martí's memory was strong in an attempt to bind their revolutionary efforts to Cuban history in order to legitimize their actions, particularly when the program stated that the movement had "no other interest than the desire to honor the unrealized dream of Martí with sacrifice."¹¹⁶ Reading as an updated "Manifiesto of Montecristi," Castro and his movement proposed solutions for many of the issues that Martí wished to address in the War of Cuban Independence, specifically the eradication of illegitimate rule, the end of racial inequality, and the end to imperialism from the United States. In addition, though many have argued that present in this manifesto is a hint towards communism, in point seven Castro states:

The *Revolution* declares that it recognizes and basis itself on the ideals of Martí, the program of the *Partido Revolucionario Cubano*, and the Manifiesto of Montecristí as well as... the *Partido del Pueblo Cubano* [(PPC/*Ortodoxos*)].¹¹⁷

Here, it is explicit that the foundation of his entire movement is on the memory and ideals of Martí and that any resemblance to communism/Marxism at this time is a result of looking at this document and assuming that Castro was always a Marxist. Though the

¹¹⁶ The Revolution, "The Cuban Revolution" in *Revolutionary Struggle*, 157.

¹¹⁷ The Revolution, "The Cuban Revolution," 158.

program was slightly more radical than Martí's, the ideals of the movement were still rooted in his ideology.

Also present in the program is Castro's fixation on idea of Martí's martyrdom. In fact, when Castro and Santamaría sat down to ensure that everything was set to go for the following morning, an argument broke out between the two on the subject. Santamaría, recognizing Castro's importance to the movement, believed that he should lead the main assault on Moncada while Castro should take the Hospital to ensure his safety. Castro, however, believed that he needed to lead the assault on Moncada, citing that Santamaría was the only person who he would trust to lead the movement and if Castro were to die, he would need Santamaría alive. Santamaría would not take this explanation from Castro and argued that Castro was much more important alive than as a symbol like Martí: "We are not going to follow Martí's example by letting you enter the most dangerous place and get killed when you are the one we need most."¹¹⁸ However, Castro had the final word on the matter and insisted that the plan stay as it was.

The attack began as scheduled at 5:30 a.m. on July 26, 1953. However, though the attacks on the hospital, court house, and Bayamo succeeded with relatively little difficulty, the actual assault on Moncada was a nightmare. Stopped at a checkpoint that Castro had not anticipated outside the barracks, the men of the movement became engaged in a fire fight without even breaching the barrack's walls. Though the three men in charge of securing the radio made it inside and were successful in their objective, the majority of the group remained outside the barracks, taking fire from all sides. After several efforts to penetrate the barrack's walls failed, the group was forced to disperse. Castro, along with several others, was able to make it into the mountains and hide. However, the majority of the movement members involved in the Moncada assault were eventually captured, tortured, and executed by the Army; among them was Abel

¹¹⁸ Franqui, *Diary*, 58.

Santamaría, who was ironically made a martyr after attempting to ensure Castro didn't martyr himself. By a stroke of luck, Castro and the group with him were captured by a liberal lieutenant who allowed Castro to surrender to him and barred his men from harming the rebels.¹¹⁹ With Castro's capture on August 1st, the last of the rebels had been rounded up. The ill-fated attempt at starting a Martían revolution was over.

Though this effort failed, two important outcomes resulted from the Moncada assault. First, Castro had succeeded in creating and making Cuba aware of an active revolutionary movement that would eventually be victorious over Batista. With the news of the attack on Moncada, popular support for the movement and its captured leader, Castro, erupted all over the country. Realizing the potential for revolution existed, many more willing people would join his revolutionary movement. Second, Castro's trial and his defense efforts were widely publicized and his passionate statements, which served as an updated plan for the course of the revolution and borrowed heavily from Martí, highlighted him again as the inspiration for the movement.¹²⁰

The trial of the captured revolutionaries began in September of 1953. Castro chose to represent himself in the trial, taking every opportunity not only to speak against the tyranny of the Batista regime, but also to advocate that the army officers who had ordered the executions of revolutionaries be brought to trial for murder. Surprisingly, these charges were accepted by the court and following the trial of the revolutionaries, the officers would be tried for murder.¹²¹ Throughout the trial, Castro's strategy was to highlight the fact that their attack on Moncada should be viewed as an attack against an illegitimate government and, as such, was a justified action. On top of this, he did not deny any of his movement's actions or seek to defend himself,

¹¹⁹ Bonachea and Valdes, *Revolutionary Struggle*, 53.

¹²⁰ Fidel Castro, "History Will Absolve Me" in *Revolutionary Struggle*, 164-221.

¹²¹ Damning evidence of mistreatment existed and was discussed in Castro's trial. See Szulc, *Fidel*, 287.

but rather took the time to blame everything on Batista's illegitimate regime. Though this would do nothing for his case, Castro saw the publicity of the trial as an opportunity for him to spread his ideas among the Cuban people, who were very receptive to them and led to an increased awareness of his revolutionary movement.

The trial proceeded in this fashion until Castro was called upon to make his closing statements. Though he had been denied legal aid, access to his actual indictment, and was, at the time of preparing his defense, in solitary confinement, Castro was able to organize an impressive two-hour oratory in which he simultaneously combated the charges against him, condemned the Batista regime, and laid out a plan for the remainder of the revolution which highlighted Martí as the intellectual author of the revolution.¹²² In the defense, Castro venerated the dead revolutionaries as heroes, a rhetorical strategy which sought to elevate the attack on Moncada to the same historical status as the war of independence. This veneration served to transform the entire failed attack into a revolutionary act of martyrdom, comparing the sacrifices of Abel Santamaría and others in the movement with Martí.¹²³ By doing this, he was clearly anticipating the speech to reach the public, who would be influenced to support a movement so fixed to Cuban history and its legacy of great martyrs. Following the summation of the Moncada attacks, Castro detailed the revolutionary plan that would have been implemented by his movement:

[1] ...return sovereignty to the people proclaiming the Constitution of 1940 as the supreme law of the state *until such time as the people would decide to modify or change it...*

[2] ...grant property, non-mortgageable and non-transferable, to all planters, tenant farmers, renters, sharecroppers, and squatters...

¹²² Rice, *Rhetorical Uses*, 47.

¹²³ Castro also emphasized the fact that he had put himself into a position like Martí had by leading his troops into battle. See Castro, "History Will Absolve Me," in *Revolutionary Struggle*, 175-76.

[3]...grant employees and workers of large industrial, mercantile, or mining... the right to 30 percent of the profits...

[4] ...grant all planters the right to share 55 percent of the sugar production...

[5]... the confiscation of all wealth of those who had misappropriated public funds in previous regimes...¹²⁴

On top of this, Castro related the need for educational reform, racial equality, and advocacy toward creating an independent Cuba and an independent Latin America, all of which were desires of Martí in 1895. These revolutionary policies, though they were already beginning to take a more radical slant with socialist elements in terms of agrarian reform, were all influenced by the example of Martí. Certain historians point to “History Will Absolve Me” to imply that there was evidence of Marxism in Castro’s ideas already at Moncada, but in reality, these revolutionary goals are an extension of the revolutionary legacy of Martí and an attempt to realize his vision. In fact, members of the PSP condemned the attack on Moncada and Castro’s revolutionary program, showing definitively that Marx was not present in Castro’s revolution at this time.¹²⁵ This is especially evident by the fact that, at this time, the re-implementation of the Constitution of 1940 was a part of the revolutionary program.¹²⁶

Castro’s defense was his greatest effort to attach himself and his movement to the memory of Martí. At the end of his oratory, Castro stated:

It looked as if the apostle Martí was going to die in the year of the centennial of his birth. It looked as if his memory would be extinguished forever... But he

¹²⁴ Castro, “History Will Absolve Me,” 184-85. Italics added for emphasis.

¹²⁵ Szulc, *Fidel*, 290.

¹²⁶ This, however, should be taken with a grain of salt. Castro, even at this time, was a vocal critic of the Constitution of 1940, which is why he included the clause in regards to *legally* altering the rule of the state with the consent of the people.

lives. He has not died. His people are rebellious, his people are worthy, his people are faithful to his memory. Cubans have fallen defending his doctrines.¹²⁷

Putting his movement at the center of the efforts to keep Martí's memory alive, Castro not only highlighted Martí as the intellectual author of his movement and his revolutionary plan, but he identified himself and his movement as Martí's true disciples. He knew that word of his speech would reach the Cuban people and that they would be inclined to support Castro's movement over Batista, as it justified the use of force against an illegitimate leader by appealing to Cuban history. Having acted valiantly and heroically in Martí's memory, Castro related to the court that he had no regrets about what he had done and would serve whatever sentence he was given without complaining; he would soon be in the ranks of Martí and the martyrs of all independence struggles in Cuba. "Condemn me, it does not matter. History will absolve me!"¹²⁸

Following his speech, Castro was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment beginning on October 13, 1953 on the Isle of Pines, an island just off the southern coast of Cuba where Martí had also been imprisoned, much to Castro's delight.¹²⁹ Though this meant the end of his revolutionary exploits for some time, Castro sought to use his time in prison to discipline himself and his fellow revolutionaries at the Isle of Pines as well as to solidify the ranks of his movement on the outside. Inside the prison, Castro implemented a strict regimen of education and exercise for all of his followers who were with him. For hours a day, the men of the movement would read from the small but constantly growing library and would teach each other history, mathematics, and science. Above all, the revolutionary principles of Martí were stressed in what came to be known as the Abel Santamaría Ideological Academy.¹³⁰ These teachings continued

¹²⁷ Castro, "History Will Absolve Me," 220.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 221.

¹²⁹ Szulc, *Fidel*, 298.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 305.

throughout the duration of their stay in prison, almost as if the revolutionaries believed their imprisonment would be but a momentary lapse of freedom.

More important than remaining disciplined during their imprisonment, however, was the continuation of the movement Castro had started. Remaining in constant contact with many of the movement's cell leaders and important women in the movement such as Melba Hernández and Haydée Santamaría (who received much shorter sentences in the trial), Castro planned the constant dissemination of propaganda to the masses in support of their movement. This flow started with the publishing of Castro's defense speech in pamphlet form that was entitled "History Will Absolve Me."¹³¹ Smuggling the speech out in hundreds of pieces of paper with lemon juice serving as the ink (remained invisible until heat from an iron was applied), Melba and Haydée succeeded in typing and printing thousands of copies of the speech and distributed its important message all over Cuba. This feat served to popularize the movement and saw an increase in movement membership and those who were sympathetic to their cause.

In addition to this, Castro stayed in constant contact with Luis Conte, a prominent and radical member of the *Ortodoxo* party who supported Castro's revolutionary activities. Castro attempted to convince the *Ortodoxo* party through Conte to openly support his revolutionary movement. Utilizing many references to Martí and his principles, Castro stated that he and Conte have a duty to their homeland to create and support revolution in Cuba. To do this, Castro stated he must "organize the men of the 26th of July Movement" and unite all opposition in Cuba under its leadership, but in order to meet this end, he would need *Ortodoxo* support.¹³² To this end, it is recorded in their correspondence that Conte identified himself as a supporter of Castro at numerous *Ortodoxo* events. Whether he was successful or not in swaying the position of the

¹³¹ Fidel Castro, *The Prison Letters of Fidel Castro*, ed. Luis Conte Aguero (New York: Nation Books, 2007), 15.

¹³² This is the first known reference to the Moncada movement as the "26th of July Movement." Castro, *Prison Letters*, 44.

party itself, the communication between the two men illustrates not only gathering popular support for the movement, but the fact that Castro was still very committed to the cause of the *Ortodoxos* and its fallen leader, Chibás.

With the movement operating in full force to constantly supply propaganda against Batista, popular support for the jailed revolutionaries rose substantially. In fact, the support went as far as to appeal to Batista for amnesty for the men of Moncada. In a letter addressed to Castro's sister, Castro discussed with her the amnesty movement in Cuba and an interview he had conducted with a group of students who supported that cause, stating:

I do not care what group or trend they belong to. I am tired of so much intrigue and pettiness! Just the same, I am not asking, nor will I ever, for amnesty. I have enough dignity to spend twenty years in here...¹³³

Whether he would ask for it or not, the people of Cuba continued to support their cause. Batista, realizing that the situation could escalate to a rebellion if not addressed, wore down enough to extend amnesty to the revolutionaries on the condition that they would not speak out against the regime any longer. To this, however, Castro stated that he and his men “would not give up one iota of honor in return for [their] freedom.”¹³⁴ Angered at Castro's defiance, Batista refused to grant the men amnesty. This act, however, caused an uprising in the Cuban press which forced Batista to adhere to amnesty on Castro's terms in order to avert a possible revolution. Congress unanimously passed the amnesty bill in early May, 1955. The rebels were released from prison on May 15th, 1955.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹³⁴ Szulc, *Fidel*, 302.

En route back to the main-land of Cuba, Castro related to Carlos Franqui, a future communist member of the 26th of July Movement (M-26-7) but then a journalist, that he had plans to unite the opposition against Batista under the ideals of Martí and Chibás and that he had no plans to stand idly by and accept tyranny.¹³⁵ These statements were proven true upon his arrival back in Havana. He began working incessantly to solidify the ranks of the M-26-7, making frequent trips to Oriente and meeting with cell leaders and movement leadership. He had ambitious plans for his movement to become a mass movement throughout Cuba. In addition, he worked tirelessly to denounce the regime in whatever medium he could, publishing many articles and making speeches against the regime. However, Castro began to fear for his safety following the arrests of Pedro Miret and his brother Raúl for fabricated crimes. In addition, Batista began banning newspapers from publishing his material in an attempt to silence him. When the regime forbade *La Calle* from publishing any more of Castro's articles, he had no more media outlets that would hear his voice.¹³⁶ Being politically silenced, Castro elected to abandon Cuba and prepare for revolution against Batista. However, before he left, to ensure the functioning of his movement on the island he created the National Directorate of the 26th of July Movement.¹³⁷ While he was away, the National Directorate would recruit more members, continue the propaganda campaign against the regime, and prepare the island for a war against Batista while Castro and a select group of revolutionaries would train in Mexico. Upon his departure, Castro addressed prominent political leaders in a letter:

As a follower of Martí, I believe the hour has come to take rights and not beg for them, to fight instead of pleading for them.

¹³⁵ Franqui, *Diary*, 89.

¹³⁶ Szulc, *Fidel*, 323.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 324.

From trips such as this, one does not return, or else one returns with tyranny beheaded at one's feet.¹³⁸

Upon arriving in Mexico, Castro began drafting a new manifesto for the 26th of July Movement as a call to arms to the people of Cuba. In this long, flowing address, Castro again relied on the use of Martí to legitimize his claims and offer support for his revolutionary program. The language in the address is much more persuasive in tone, clearly an attempt to appeal to the masses. A large difference between this document and his previous manifestos is his reliance on the image of his group as strictly a revolutionary group, bringing a more militarized image than his previous addresses. He stated explicitly that the M-26-7 was “not a political party but a revolutionary movement. Its ranks are open to all Cubans... Its leadership is collective and secret... Its structure is functional.”¹³⁹ This is clearly a reflection of the change in organization of the movement following Moncada in an effort to ensure its functionality and appeal to the masses.

In the manifesto, Castro had essentially condensed the revolutionary program from “History Will Absolve Me” into 15 points. Of the previous points, all are present, but a few more are included:

3. Immediate industrialization of the country by means of a vast plan made and promoted by the state...
4. Nationalization of public services: telephone, electricity and gas. ...
10. Establishment of an inviolable military roster safeguarding the members of the armed forces so that they can be removed... only for good reasons...

¹³⁸ Fidel Castro, “Letter to Prominent Political Leaders,” in *Revolutionary Struggle*, 257.

¹³⁹ Fidel Castro, “Manifesto No. 1 to the Cuban People” in *Revolutionary Struggle*, 269.

13. Social security and state unemployment compensation.¹⁴⁰

This new plan, though more radical than the last, was still consistent with the ideas of Martí's vision of an independent Cuba. While these points could fit into a Marxist program, they are by no means by themselves Marxist ideas. In fact, many of the ideas were common throughout Latin America at the time.¹⁴¹ More than anything, this program can be considered to be anti-imperialist and radically nationalist. To think the program is evidence of Castro having Marxist ideas is to discount the impact of Martí and Cuban history on his revolutionary movement and manifesto.

In order to begin a revolution in Cuba, the movement would need substantially more material support and manpower. To address these ends, Castro appealed to the *Ortodoxo* leadership in the manifesto. On August 15, 1955, the *Ortodoxo* party held a conference to debate whether or not they would participate in elections that Batista said he would hold in 1956. However, the conference came to a standstill when a pamphlet written by Fidel Castro was read aloud to the delegates. In the message, Castro stated that if they truly believed that Batista would hold fair elections, they were in denial.¹⁴² Additionally, Castro stated that even if elections were held, to partake in them would legitimize a tyrannical regime, and to do so would blaspheme the true ideals of Chibás, Martí, and the *Ortodoxo* party.¹⁴³ The only choice now, Castro argued, was for the party to take a revolutionary line.¹⁴⁴ Following the end of Castro's message, the room burst into applause. The party then endorsed the revolutionary program of Fidel Castro, becoming the first party to take a revolutionary line.

¹⁴⁰ Castro, "Manifiesto No. 1," 269-70.

¹⁴¹ For example, nationalization of industries was seen as a nationalist effort against U.S. imperialism in countries like Guatemala, Mexico, and Argentina.

¹⁴² Fidel Castro, "Letter to the Congress of Ortodoxo Militants" in *Revolutionary Struggle*, 272.

¹⁴³ Castro, "Letter to Ortodoxo Militants," 274-75.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 277.

Though securing the support of the *Ortodoxo* party was a great step towards being able to finance a revolution, the movement would need more if it wished to be successful. Castro then decided to take another page from Martí's life and fund-raise in exile communities in the United States to secure more funds and unify the exile opposition under the 26th of July Movement. In October, Castro left for a several week journey to secure support and funds from the exile communities. In his speeches, Castro urged the exile populations to consider Cuba's deteriorating political climate and stated that armed revolution was the only solution to remedy it.¹⁴⁵ Overall, the trip was a resounding success, securing funds at every stop of his tour. In addition, he was able to set up "26th of July Clubs" in the U.S. to unify the support among the exiles and continue to receive funding from them.¹⁴⁶

Following his successful fund-raising excursion, Castro returned to Mexico to begin training for the revolution and continue to work with the M-26-7 back in Cuba to prepare for their imminent arrival (which was now promised to occur by the end of 1956). For training, Castro enlisted the expertise of Alberto Bayo, a Cuban born guerilla war expert and veteran of the Spanish Civil War who Castro convinced to help them for no pay as an extension of Bayo's duty to his native country.¹⁴⁷ Unlike the training prior to Moncada, Bayo prepared the men of the 26th of July Movement for a long guerilla war which, with the proper amount of local support, they would surely win. The training this time around was much more disciplined and military oriented, given Bayo's training skills. From December of 1955 until the time of departure in November of 1956, the revolutionaries trained as they never had in preparation for a war, not just an attack, on the Batista regime. However, the M-26-7 was still short of funds and lacked the

¹⁴⁵ Fidel Castro, "Speech in New York" in *Revolutionary Struggle*, 282-83.

¹⁴⁶ Szulc, *Fidel*, 343.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 326-27.

unification of the opposition that they had desired in order to secure a successful landing in Cuba.

Attempting to build revolutionary unity in Cuba, Castro was in constant correspondence with opposition groups, especially with the Revolutionary Directorate (DR), a student movement formed from the University Students Federation (FEU). Though the two groups differed in their proposed tactics, Castro saw the need to unite the opposition against Batista, just as Martí had done prior to the war of independence. With these goals in mind, Castro sat down with José Antonio Echevarría in Mexico to iron out an alliance in September of 1956. This alliance stated explicitly that “[b]oth organizations have decided to unite solidly their efforts in order to overthrow the tyranny and carry out the Cuban Revolution,” as well putting forth the idea that all revolutionary forces should unify with them.¹⁴⁸ With the signing of the alliance, Castro had shown that he recognized the need for revolutionary unity, which he had learned from the works of Martí.

Following the signing of the Mexico Pact, the M-26-7 received an abundance of anonymous funds, which were used to purchase a small yacht that the revolutionaries could use to sail across the Caribbean to Cuba.¹⁴⁹ With their passage to Cuba secured by October of 1956, Castro was eager to begin his revolution. However, word from the Santiago de Cuba M-26-7 leader, Frank País, suggested that the Movement back in Cuba would need more time to prepare their uprising that was to coincide with Castro’s landing in Oriente. Castro was angered at this news and felt he could not push the start of the revolution back further because he had promised the Cuban people he would arrive by the end of 1956 to liberate them. However, the argument between the two movement officials was settled when the Mexican intelligence service

¹⁴⁸ Fidel Castro and José Antonio Echevarría Bianchi, “The Mexico Pact” in *Revolutionary Struggle*, 337-38.

¹⁴⁹ Though it is not certain, Tad Szulc proposes that the money came from Carlos Prío, the much maligned former president of Cuba who had ties with the DR. See Szulc, *Fidel*, 366.

discovered a stock pile of arms that the revolutionaries were to take with them on their voyage; Castro had no choice but to leave Mexico as soon as he could to ensure that he did not lose any more arms or men.¹⁵⁰ The revolutionaries' departure was imminent.

From the Granma to the Sierra Maestra, 1956-1958

With the commencement of the Cuban Revolution, Castro had displayed himself as a fervent disciple of Martí in all aspects of his planning. The movement which he formed following Martí's example, the 26th of July Movement, had established itself as the leading opposition and revolutionary movement in Cuba by uniting prominent dissenting groups in a struggle against tyranny. Though suffering early setbacks in the first months of the revolution, the movement would remain the most active and effective group in challenging Batista's reign for the duration of the struggle, always staying true to the ideals of Martí. However, as the revolution progressed, divisions began to surface within the 26th of July Movement between the *llano* (the urban faction which supported Castro and fought in the cities) and Castro's more radical guerrillas in the Sierra Maestra over both tactics and the goals of the revolution, which Castro began to fear would put his Martían vision for the revolution in jeopardy.

Castro set sail for Cuba on November 25, 1956 after coming to the conclusion that it was not safe to wait any longer in Mexico. This voyage, however, turned out to be a drastic failure. The men departed from Mexico on a small yacht named the *Granma* carrying 82 men, masses of ammunition and weapons, and barely enough food to last five days.¹⁵¹ The ship, made to hold only 25 passengers, was in poor condition and was not fit to sail 100 miles, let alone 1,300 miles.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 369-70.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 374.

Batista, knowing that Castro would follow the example of Martí to the last detail and would land in Oriente, ordered the eastern coast of Cuba to be heavily patrolled by the navy, forcing Castro to swing around Cuba much further east and land much further south than he had originally planned to.¹⁵² Though Batista had no idea when Castro would land, Frank País' failed uprising in Santiago on the morning of the 30th indicated that Castro was near.¹⁵³ The element of surprise no longer favored the revolutionaries.

Castro and his men finally reached land at dawn on the morning of December 2nd. The guerillas spent much of the next three days marching east to the Sierra Maestra. On the morning of the 5th, when few of the men could even stand due to exhaustion, they set up camp for the first time. However, their brief stop would end in disaster. In the early afternoon the revolutionaries were ambushed by Batista's rural guard. By the end of the ordeal, Castro's Rebel Army was reduced to 16 men, broken up into several scattered groups who now had no choice but to wander east in hopes of reuniting with the movement. The next day, the Batista regime announced that the revolutionary movement had been destroyed and that Castro himself was dead.¹⁵⁴

Though Castro's movement was in shambles, upon reaching the base of the Sierra Maestra Castro had his faith restored in the revolution. Castro, along with his small group of Faustino Pérez and Universo Sánchez (both of whom were in the leadership of the M-26-7), were moved from safe-house to safe-house by the M-26-7 peasant network that was already in place. The following days brought more revolutionaries and peasant recruits to Castro's position. His

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Ernesto "Che" Guevara, *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War* (Melbourne: Ocean Books, 2006), 14.

¹⁵⁴ Franqui, *Diary*, 126.

optimism knowing no bounds, on December 20th when his "army" numbered 20 men and 12 arms, Castro remarked, "Now, yes, we have won the war!"¹⁵⁵

Feeling confident in the reconstruction of his Rebel Army, Castro decided he must send word to the *llano* for three purposes: to inform them that he was, in fact, alive, request the printing of an important document of the revolution, and to request that the movement to bring newsmen - preferably foreign - to the Sierra Maestra. To do this, Castro sent Faustino Pérez because he was a leader among the *llano* and he would bring credibility to the news better than anyone currently in the mountains.¹⁵⁶ When he arrived, Pérez issued the order for the Program Manifesto of the 26th of July Movement to be circulated to the masses.¹⁵⁷ The Manifesto served to further define the 26th of July Movement by solidifying the two plans that had been put forth by Castro in the time leading up to the revolution, "History Will Absolve Me" and "Manifesto No. 1 to the Cuban People," and also more explicitly discussed the revolution's historical roots and its relationship to Martí. Prior to this, it had been stated that the ideological author of the revolution was Martí, but in the Program Manifesto, the overall goal of the revolution was stated as such:

We are resuming the unfinished Cuban Revolution. That is why we preach the "necessary war" of José Martí for exactly the same reasons he proclaimed it: against the regressive ills of the colony, against the sword that shelters tyrants, against corrupt and rapacious politicians, against the merchants of our political economy. We fight against the ills produced by that sorrowful amalgam.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Fidel Castro quoted in Szulc, *Fidel*, 387.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 391.

¹⁵⁷ This document had been written in November before the start of the revolution. See Rice, *Rhetorical Uses*, 64.

¹⁵⁸ 26th of July Movement, "The Program Manifesto of the 26th of July Movement," in *Cuba in Revolution*, eds. Rolando E. Bonachea and Nelson P. Valdes (New York: Anchor Books, 1972), 116.

Now, the revolution was defined as an extension of the unfulfilled revolution that had been ongoing since 1895, using Martí's words as justification for Castro's fight.

After a discussion of the historical justification for a renewed Cuban Revolution, the Program Manifesto related the ideology of the movement. Here, it is stated that the revolution would not seek foreign solutions to local problems, a very Martían idea, and as such, "its [the M-26-7] ideology will come forth from the land and the Cuban people."¹⁵⁹ In addition, in this section a very loose definition of a constitution is given, which fully displayed Castro's hesitance to re-implement the Constitution of 1940. It is stated that the ideology of the revolution must come from the "*particular circumstances* of the people and the country," and that these ideas must be "clearly defined" because in the past, constitutions had been used as a basis for crimes and corruption.¹⁶⁰ Here, the M-26-7 through Castro, though quite vague, implied that the Constitution of 1940 should not be included in the revolutionary program and if it was, it must be altered to take into account the "particular circumstances" which the country was facing in the 1950's, not 1940. Though it had been hinted at in previous documents, it was not abundantly clear that Castro had no use for the Constitution of 1940 in his revolutionary program.

The ideology of the movement was further elaborated upon when Castro stated, "...the 26th of July Movement can be identified as guided by the *ideals of democracy, nationalism, and social justice*."¹⁶¹ Further, it was stated that these principles "emanate from the political thought of José Martí" and that they lay the philosophical base of the struggle against Batista.¹⁶² These principles were elaborated upon in the form of a ten point program, all of which were prefaced by a quote from the Apostle himself. These ten points are simply an amalgamation of the

¹⁵⁹ 26th of July Movement, "The Program Manifesto," 128.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* Italics added for emphasis.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.* Italics in original.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 129.

previous points which were put forth by Castro, but found within them are more justifications in the works of Martí. While certain scholars use these points as further proof of Castro having Marxist ideas, the language and ideas put forth in them are consistent with his previous documents, though there was more emphasis put work and the worker, which was given its own point for the first time.¹⁶³ However, this discussion of the worker is not sufficient evidence to suggest that Castro was a Marxist, for Martí himself put heavy emphasis on the worker in his works and ideas. Regardless, this document was of paramount importance to the movement. Not only was its dissemination rooted to increased support for Castro and his movement, the Program Manifesto established the ideological connection between the M-26-7 and Martí more concretely than any previous document, cementing Castro's own revolutionary aspirations firmly on the fulfillment of Martí's ideals.

Castro had learned from Martí that the press served as propaganda during a revolutionary struggle, and as such, he wished to expose as much of the world as he could to his revolutionary cause in hopes that it would promote both domestic support for his movement and perhaps even foreign sanctions against Batista.¹⁶⁴ The *llano* leadership of the M-26-7 was receptive to Castro's request for journalists, immediately getting in contact with Herbert L. Matthews of the *New York Times*. Matthews, along with several members of the 26th of July Movement's National Directorate, arrived in camp on February 15th, 1957.¹⁶⁵ Matthews spoke with Castro in length about the war so far, the Sierra Maestra, and the fact that Batista still upheld publically that Castro was dead.¹⁶⁶ Castro was careful what his men did while the reporter was there; not only did they wish to have their cause reported, but Castro wished to give off an air power in the

¹⁶³ See Rice, *Rhetorical Uses*, 67-71 for a discussion on the Marxist undertones of the document.

¹⁶⁴ The "Manifiesto of Montecristi" was, itself, written with the intent of being published in American newspapers and sent with a request for reporters to come to Cuba to document the independence struggle in 1895.

¹⁶⁵ Szulc, *Fidel*, 408.

¹⁶⁶ Herbert L. Matthews, "The Cuban Story in the New York Times" in *The Cuba Reader*, 326-32.

Sierra Maestra, and as such, attempted to trick Matthews into thinking he commanded a much larger force than he did (which at the time was 25- his previous 20 plus 5 members from the National Directorate). His ruse worked. When the *New York Times* printed the article, Matthews related that Castro's forces, "maybe 40 in all," were in control of the Sierra Maestra and winning out against the Batista forces in "a battle against time."¹⁶⁷ The impact that this article had cannot be understated. By following Martí's example of enlisting the use foreign press as propaganda, Castro was not only able to emphasize his connection to Martí's by borrowing his tactics, but also he also legitimized his revolutionary struggle. Reaching the Cuban public at roughly the same time as the Program Manifesto, it was the first confirmation that Castro was definitely alive. This caught the Batista regime off-guard, who continued to deny that Castro was alive and stated that the interview was a hoax.¹⁶⁸ The publishing of the article proved to be a turning point for the guerillas in the Sierra Maestra and the movement as a whole gained more credibility, visibility, and support.

Following the publishing of the *New York Times* article, Castro's guerillas began to slowly extend their sphere of influence in the Sierra Maestra over the next few months. Though this period was characterized as a time of immense difficulty by Ernesto "Che" Guevara, Castro remained optimistic of their chances in the struggle due to the support they were receiving from the peasants.¹⁶⁹ Castro's plan in the Sierra Maestra relied heavily on the assumption that the peasantry would help him for the duration of the struggle. However, to look back on the revolution and say that the peasants were helpful to the guerillas would be an understatement; they were essential. Through close relations with the peasants, Castro was able to secure an active and loyal support base that would offer not only new soldiers, but also food, navigation

¹⁶⁷ Matthews, "Cuban Story," 331.

¹⁶⁸ Szulc, *Fidel*, 413.

¹⁶⁹ Guevara, *Reminiscences*, 62.

through the mountainous terrain, and the ability to divert Batista's men.¹⁷⁰ By the end of May 1957, the 26th of July Movement controlled the Sierra Maestra, which translated into the first decisive string of rebel military victories of the whole struggle.

The political situation within the M-26-7 became exaggerated with the sudden success of Castro and his rebels in the Sierra Maestra. As early as February, a power struggle had been developing between the *llano* and the Sierra Maestra factions of the movement. By the time it was July, Castro's position as the leader of both his movement and the opposition to Batista had been established. This placed the guerilla war in the Sierra Maestra as the movement's top priority. However, the *llano* leadership believed that the decision-making of the movement should be shared with the *llano* and that fighting should be occurring with greater intensity in the cities.¹⁷¹ This view was shared by Frank País, the leader of the Santiago cell of the M-26-7. Though País was very loyal to Castro's cause, he and Castro disagreed on how the movement should be run. In a letter dated July 7, País argued that the inefficiency within the movement is a result of not being able to hold meetings with Castro often enough, and as a result, he took it upon himself to "revamp the Movement in its entirety."¹⁷² This would entail a much larger force of men conducting clandestine operations in cities throughout Cuba, leading up to a general strike of workers to topple the regime, where democratic rule would be restored in Cuba. Castro, who by this time had already elaborated on his opinion of *restoring* democracy in Cuba through the Constitution of 1940 in the Program Manifesto, began to see an ideological divide between himself and the National Directorate/*llano*. Castro identified the tactics of the *llano* and its desire to restore the old political order as counter to his goal of completely changing the political system in Cuba to fulfill Martí's revolutionary vision. It is likely that Castro began to distrust the

¹⁷⁰ Ernesto "Che" Guevara, "Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War" in *The Cuba Reader*, 316.

¹⁷¹ Szulc, *Fidel*, 422.

¹⁷² Franqui, *Diary*, 202.

llano at this time, realizing as Che Guevara had that they were essentially "two separate groups, with different tactics and strategy."¹⁷³ However, this topic would never get to be discussed in person between Castro and País; on July 30th, 1957, País was murdered in the streets by a group of soldiers. Castro used the event to vehemently denounce Batista as well as revolutionary groups who do not act (presumably speaking about the DR).¹⁷⁴ In addition, Castro ordered that all support be focused on the Sierra Maestra, reducing the *llano*'s responsibilities significantly. The divide between the two groups continued to deepen as a result.

Another instance of division between Castro and the movement occurred as a result of the "Sierra Maestra Manifesto," which was drafted by Castro with the help of Raúl Chibás and Felipe Pazos, two well-known *Ortodoxo* politicians who identified with the *llano* rather than Castro. The three met and came to an agreement on how the revolution would play out, including a description of how elections were to take place following the revolution, stating:

...[T]he provisional government will hold general elections for all offices of the state, the provinces, and the municipalities at the end of a year following the norms of the Constitution of 1940... and power will be granted to the elected candidates.¹⁷⁵

The document was likely more ceremonial than a reflection of the actual sentiments of Castro. This is displayed by the lack of any of the radical reforms which Castro had been proposing, including agrarian reform and nationalization of industries. However, Che saw the document as a betrayal in the making, thinking this was a way for politicians to manipulate the

¹⁷³ Szulc, *Fidel*, 411.

¹⁷⁴ Fidel Castro, "Palabras ante la muerte de Frank País," in *Broadcast Transcripts of Radio Rebelde, July 1957-Dec. 1958* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Latin American Pamphlet Collection, 1980), Microfilm.

¹⁷⁵ Movimiento 26 de Julio, "Al Pueblo de Cuba" in *Documents of the Movimiento 26 de Julio, May 1957-Dec. 1958* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Latin American Pamphlet Collection, 1980), Microfilm.

movement to improve their positions in post-war Cuba after the M-26-7's inevitable victory.¹⁷⁶ Regardless, the document was signed by all parties involved, granting them membership in the leadership of the 26th of July Movement. This, however, would not last long.

With the first year of fighting coming to a close in November 1957, Castro was predominantly focused on extending the Liberated Zone in the Sierra Maestra and training his troops, which now numbered over 200.¹⁷⁷ That same month, a meeting was held in Miami between all of the opposition forces in Cuba. Unbeknownst to Castro, the M-26-7 was represented at the meeting by Felipe Pazos and several delegates from the *llano* leadership. At the meeting, it was discussed that no one group should have power over the entire revolution and that all groups should share in the decision making and in the benefits of a victory over Batista.¹⁷⁸ When Castro received word of this proposed liberation junta, Castro was outraged at the audacity of the *llano*, especially Pazos. Though Castro was an advocate of Martí's idea of revolutionary unity, he saw this pact as opportunistic and as an attack on him and his movement. In a letter that publically denounced the meeting, Castro stated that all the parties who met, including the members from his own movement, have done nothing for the revolution up to that point, and as such, there would be no power distribution among those who had no revolutionary role.¹⁷⁹ Castro also rejected the idea of incorporating his movement into the armed forces after the victory of the revolution on the grounds that he did not approve of any delegation to the meeting.¹⁸⁰ By refuting the formation of the Liberation Junta, Castro effectively halted its progress because his armed forces were the anchor of the plan. With this stance, Castro made

¹⁷⁶ Guevara, *Reminiscences*, 122-123.

¹⁷⁷ Szulc, *Fidel*, 426.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 427. Presumably, Pazos was empowered to do this by a statement in the Sierra Maestra Manifesto which states "To form this front [or coalition of powers] it is not necessary that the political parties... go to the Sierra Maestra." (Movimiento 26 de Julio, "Al Pueblo de Cuba" in *Documents of the Movimiento 26 de Julio*)

¹⁷⁹ Fidel Castro, "Letter to the Cuban Liberation Junta" in *Revolutionary Struggle*, 351-63.

¹⁸⁰ Castro, "Cuban Liberation Junta," 358.

new enemies with the opposition in Cuba, but again established his movement as the premier revolutionary organization. In addition, Castro cited Martí in his denunciation of the junta. This implied that all those involved, including the *llano*, were acting against Martí's revolutionary vision and were opportunists. With the refusal of the Miami Pact, Castro further distanced himself from the more liberal members of his movement. These divisions were to become more pronounced and come to a breaking point in the following year.

Break Between Comrades and the Road to Victory, 1958-1959

The rift between the *llano* and Sierra factions of the 26th of July Movement continued to split further throughout 1958. This divide fully ruptured following the failed general strike organized by the *llano* in April, resulting in a complete restructuring of the movement.¹⁸¹ After this strike did not succeed in harming Batista, Castro sought ways to keep the urban faction out of the decision making loop due to a severe distrust of the liberal members of the *llano*. It was at this moment that Castro began searching for more radical avenues for the course of the revolution to ensure that the old political order would not be restored. To protect his revolution and Martí's vision, Castro began reaching out to the PSP in order to secure more radical support for the revolution. Ultimately, in order to protect his Martíán vision and fulfill the unfinished revolution, Castro created a strategic relationship with the Cuban communists, choosing an experienced and powerful ally to ensure the revolution would not succumb to the liberal forces of the *llano* or the old political order.

In the early months of 1958, the training of rebel troops continued in the Sierra Maestra. However, the training that the troops underwent was not simply military exercises; at this time

¹⁸¹ Szulc, *Fidel*, 48.

Castro began transforming his Rebel Army into a tool of social revolution.¹⁸² From interactions with the peasants in the Sierra Maestra, Castro was learning *from them* what a revolutionary program should include for all of Cuba, implementing “mini-land reform” policies and protecting the peasants from wealthy landholders in the liberated areas, both of which were crucial to fulfilling Martí’s vision.¹⁸³ It is likely that through these interactions, Castro was educated on how social revolution should be implemented following the rebel victory, which was directly tied to using his Rebel Army as an ideological force to change Cuba into the independent nation that Martí had envisioned. These realizations would have radicalized both Castro and his army as the prophets of true revolution, which was a stark contrast to the goals and tactics of the *llano*. This, along with the fact that the only substantial revolutionary victories were achieved in the mountains, explains why Castro was much more biased towards the Sierra faction. However, in the face of the Miami Pact, Castro put this bias behind him in order to organize revolutionary unity under his movement to avoid significant division in the opposition forces; he did not want to repeat the Revolution of 1933.

Being more liberal in tactics, the *llano* was crucial in organizing opposition support for the movement because they appealed more to moderates than did Castro’s radical guerillas. Though Castro was of the mindset that the clandestine tactics of the urban cells were much less effective than his guerilla army’s, when the DR started a small guerilla movement in the Escambray Mountains in central Cuba to compete with the M-26-7, Castro realized the importance of restoring revolutionary unity.¹⁸⁴ The *llano* would be his tool for doing so. Responding to desires from members of the *llano*, stating that revolution should be carried out on all fronts, Castro agreed to their proposed tactic of using a general strike to combat Batista in the

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 433.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 437.

cities.¹⁸⁵ The plan for the strike was laid out in a document written jointly by Castro and Faustino Pérez, the generator of the proposed strike and one of Castro's closest comrades. In the plan, it was declared that the struggle against Batista had entered its final stage, and as such, the "*golpe decisivo* [final blow]" was to be a general revolutionary strike followed by military action.¹⁸⁶ Additionally, the 22 point manifesto highlighted the roles of many groups in fulfilling this plan, ranging from workers organizations, student groups, and "revolutionary organizations that support the movement."¹⁸⁷ Unity was emphasized in the closing point of the manifesto, stating, "[f]rom this moment, the country should consider itself in total war against the tyranny... the entire nation is determined to be free or to perish."¹⁸⁸ Using this language, it was clear that Castro was proposing that all opposition groups were fighting the same fight and should work together in an effort to be successful in fulfilling Martí's vision of a free, independent Cuba.

Having used the manifesto in an attempt to create revolutionary unity, the *llano* leadership went to work in planning the strike. According to the plan, the date was to be announced shortly before the strike in order to ensure the revolutionaries would have the element of surprise. With the broadcasting of this call to arms on April 9, the strike was in full effect:

Strike! Strike! Strike! Everyone on strike. Everyone into the streets. We must stop the tyranny of Batista... from keeping the public services running. We must prevent shops from opening; we must prevent traffic on the streets; we must prevent every move by the dictatorship... Strike! Strike! Strike!¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ Franqui, *Diary*, 281.

¹⁸⁶ Movimiento 26 de Julio, "Manifiesto del Movimiento Revolucionario '26 de Julio' al Pueblo de Cuba" in *Documents of the Movimiento 26 de Julio*.

¹⁸⁷ Movimiento 26 de Julio, "Manifiesto del Movimiento Revolucionario."

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Movimiento 26 de Julio, "Llamamiento a la Huelga," in *Broadcast Transcripts of Radio Rebelde, July 1957-Dec. 1958* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Latin American Pamphlet Collection, 1980), Microfilm.

Many workers flooded the streets throughout Havana; some were even able to shut off power to areas in Havana by attacking a power plant.¹⁹⁰ However, Batista's police also flooded the streets, heavily armed and with no remorse; at least 100 strikers were killed and hundreds more were arrested.¹⁹¹ With the loss of so many of those who supported the movement and the fact that no lasting damage to the regime was inflicted by the events of April 9, the strike was a huge failure.

Upon learning of the outcome of the strike, Castro was devastated and worried for the future of his revolutionary movement in general. Acknowledging the division between the two factions of his movement in a letter, Castro states:

The strike experience involved a great moral rout for the Movement, but I hope that we'll be able to regain the people's faith in us. The Revolution is once again in danger and its salvation rests in our hands... The story of the strike has been a repetition of the story of the sugar harvests. No one will ever be able to make me trust the organization [the *llano*] again.¹⁹²

These sentiments, coupled with the news that the strike failed due to poor planning on behalf of the leadership of the urban movement, led to a restructuring of the movement.¹⁹³ On May 3, 1958, a meeting was held in the Sierra Maestra for the purpose of investigating the failure of the strike and to eliminate the problem. At this meeting, Pérez and several of the other urban leaders were essentially on trial for their actions, being accused of being counterrevolutionary and for sabotaging the strike by not including the PSP in its execution.¹⁹⁴ In addition, it was cited that

¹⁹⁰ Franqui, *Diary*, 297.

¹⁹¹ Szulc, *Fidel*, 440.

¹⁹² Franqui, *Diary*, 300.

¹⁹³ Szulc relates that there was a lack of cohesion among groups working to organize the strike. In fact, the leaders of the *llano* faction disobeyed a direct order given by Castro ("all Cuban workers, whatever are their political or revolutionary allegiances, have the right to belong to strike committees.") when they refused to allow communists to participate in the planning of the strike, who were the group most connected to the workers and were willing to help. See Szulc, *Fidel*, 440-41.

¹⁹⁴ Guevara, *Reminiscences*, 245.

poor planning, poor worker recruitment, and poor estimation of the number of available police were all responsible for the loss of many lives and more who were arrested.¹⁹⁵ In the end, Castro admitted that he no longer trusted the tactics or functioning of National Directorate of the 26th of July Movement, and as a result, it was decided that Castro would be named the commander-in-chief of the armed forces and that the leadership of the movement would be relocated to the Sierra Maestra, where Castro would serve as general secretary.¹⁹⁶ This decision finally ended the dispute between the two factions of the movement over how the war would be won: through guerilla tactics or through clandestine action and strikes. The guerilla strategy won out, eliminating the influence of the liberal faction of the M-26-7, which proposed a return to the Constitution of 1940, in favor of the radical guerillas and the creation of a radically different political order and the fulfillment of Cuban independence.

Following the failure of the strike and the consolidation of leadership of the 26th of July Movement in the Sierra Maestra, Castro began having open relations with the PSP for the first time since the start of the revolution. With the news of the strike's collapse, a communist party official formally contacted Castro to alert him of the *llano's* incompetence in planning the strike and their unwillingness to work with members of the party, despite the PSP being willing to help the revolutionary cause in a meaningful way for the first time.¹⁹⁷ This intelligence was crucial to the decision to restructure the movement and do away with the liberal leadership and tactics. With the movement restructured along Castro's more radical Martían line, the PSP sent officials to the Sierra Maestra for the first time in order to discuss tactics and what a post-war Cuba would

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 246-47.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 245.

¹⁹⁷ Szulc, *Fidel*, 441.

look like, even allowing PSP members to join the revolutionary struggle in the Sierra Maestra.¹⁹⁸ In addition, Carlos Franqui, a former PSP member turned fellow traveler, was asked to take over *Radio Rebelde* after a more liberal member of the movement was forced out.¹⁹⁹ By mid-1958, it was apparent that the 26th of July Movement and the PSP had forged a bond following the elimination of liberal influence in the leadership of the movement. However, it was less than certain what the future of the revolution held for Cuba.

Though the PSP still had not formally joined the revolution, the correspondence between the two groups and their participation in the guerilla struggle in the Sierra Maestra was certainly an omen of changing attitudes. Castro and most of his movement continued to be suspicious of the motives of the PSP but, with the elimination of urban wing of the 26th of July Movement, Castro sought more support for his movement.²⁰⁰ As such, he continued to appeal to opposition groups in Cuba in hopes of unifying the revolutionary cause. Though this was arguably an attempt to secure more funds from moderate groups, Castro's "Unity Manifesto" displayed a desire to include the PSP in the future of the revolution. Issued in July, following the first contacts between the guerillas and the PSP, Castro stated that he was "aware of the need to act in a united manner. Our fellow citizens demand it."²⁰¹ The manifesto read like a Martíán proclamation, asking the all Cubans to work together in order to fulfill the unfinished revolution of 1895. However, unlike the March proclamation of unity, this document is much more vague about who should participate, stating that all who are opposed to the regime should fight.²⁰²

Whether this was an attempt to leave room for the PSP in the opposition for the first time is

¹⁹⁸ These communist fighters joined almost exclusively with Raúl Castro's column of guerillas, who was the only member of the entire M-26-7 who was a member of the PSP prior to the revolution. From June 1958 to the end of the revolution, Raúl's column would be the most radical in the entire movement and was used as a means for the PSP and Castro to communicate. See Szulc, *Fidel*, 451.

¹⁹⁹ Carlos Franqui, *Broadcast Transcripts of Radio Rebelde*.

²⁰⁰ Szulc, *Fidel*, 444.

²⁰¹ Fidel Castro, "Unity Manifesto of the Sierra Maestra," in *Revolutionary Struggle*, 387.

²⁰² Castro, "Unity Manifesto," 387-88.

uncertain. However, what is certain is that days after this proclamation was made, permanent communist presence was established in the Sierra Maestra.²⁰³

From July 1958 until the end of the Cuban Revolutionary War, PSP party officials and Castro kept in close contact. Though Castro avoided publically identifying with them, it was clear that the relationship between the two groups was growing stronger. For this reason, certain scholars have pointed to this period as the time in which Castro shifted his program to a communist revolution or that this was the period when he finally let his already present Marxist tendencies come to light. However, these interpretations ignore Castro's obvious devotion to fulfilling a Martían and *Cuban* revolution, not a Marxist revolution. The sole goal of the revolution was to create an independent Cuba as Martí had intended and failed to do in 1895. Throughout the course of the war, Castro continued to base his actions on and preach the gospel of the Apostle Martí. Given these facts, it seems unlikely that Castro would shift the trajectory of the revolution away from Martí's vision toward another ideology. Rather, it should be argued that the emergence of a relationship between the M-26-7 and the PSP was not a sign of Castro shifting his ideology, but a strategic move to secure more radical support for his Martían vision. Following the failure of the strike in April, Castro had identified that the liberal tactics and politics of the *llano* would do nothing but hurt the movement, which is why he consolidated the leadership in the Sierra Maestra. Having lost faith in the urban wing of his movement, Castro needed to secure unity and support for his movement, specifically from a radical group that would approve of his desires to create an entirely new Cuba through a social revolution.²⁰⁴ In addition, by forging this relationship, Castro was strategic by choosing an experienced group

²⁰³ Szulc, *Fidel*, 452-53.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 444.

with organizational structure, a quality that the *llano* certainly lacked.²⁰⁵ In creating a bond with the PSP, Castro in no way committed himself to the path of communism, but rather secured an ally with radical views which would allow Castro to implement a social revolution that would fulfill Martí's unfinished revolution much better than the liberal idea of re-implementing a constitution that no longer spoke for the Cuban people.

With greater unity secured and Castro's guerilla's growing in number throughout 1958, the M-26-7 was able to successfully defeat Batista's proposed final offensive in 76 days.²⁰⁶ With this victory, morale was high in the Sierra Maestra, and the guerillas were stronger than ever. By October, Castro planned his own final offensive, leaving the Sierra Maestra to fight in the lowlands for the first time since the beginning of the revolution.²⁰⁷ The offensive was a huge success, taking many cities with ease despite being greatly outnumbered. By the time his columns lead by Camilo Cienfuegos and Che Guevara converged on Havana in January of 1959, Batista had already fled the country.²⁰⁸ In addressing a crowd of thousands in Santiago de Cuba after Castro liberated the city, he spoke of Martí, nationalism, and the sacrifices of the people in destroying tyranny on the island once and for all.²⁰⁹ "This time," he said, "the Revolution will come into power."²¹⁰ The war was over. The unfinished revolution of Martí would be fulfilled.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 445.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 455.

²⁰⁸ Bonachea and Valdes, *Revolutionary Struggle*, 118.

²⁰⁹ Franqui, *Diary*, 490.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 489.

Chapter Three: ***Consolidating a Martían Communism, 1959-1962***

Following the military victory over Batista and the formation of a political relationship between the 26th of July Movement and the Partido Socialista Popular (PSP), what prompted Fidel Castro to shift the course of the revolution toward communism?

With the revolution underway in January 1959, Castro and his victorious movement sought to radically redefine all aspects of Cuban life in a way that would fulfill the vision that Martí had for Cuba when he started his revolution in 1895. However, with the addition of the PSP into the revolutionary fold following the break between Castro and the liberal faction of his movement, the revolution was headed in a much more radical direction. While many explanations have been given for this shift, including increased communist influence from Ernesto “Che Guevara and Fidel’s brother, Raúl, or that pressure from the United States pushed Castro into a position where socialism was his only option, these explanations simply do not address the deep Martían roots of the revolution and Castro’s continued devotion to his ideas at every phase.

This chapter will discuss the post-revolutionary atmosphere in Cuba, arguing that the decision to declare the revolution communist was a strategic measure to safeguard the Martían reforms that the revolution achieved in its first years and to preserve the radicalism needed to profoundly change all aspects of life in Cuba through a social revolution. Following the revolution, Castro was working closely with the PSP for the first time. Though he had not stated he was a communist, Castro began making plans to use the organizational structure of his new ally to form a radical, unified coalition that would work towards implementing his Martían revolutionary reforms. The United States did not approve of many of these reforms and

hostilities began to mount between Castro and the U.S. Though the PSP was wary about upsetting the U.S., Castro was determined to hold his ground in order to fully realize Martí's vision of a Cuba independent of imperialist influence. What resulted from these harsh relations was the U.S. organized Bay of Pigs invasion. This failed military effort was successful in securing the future of the revolution because, with the wave of popular support for radicalization that resulted from it, Castro declared the Marxist nature of the revolution. Until that time, Castro had resisted pressures to declare the revolution communist until he was certain that he would have enough control over the party to ensure his Martíán revolutionary vision by not having to submit to a rigid party line. With communism being declared in Cuba, Castro went about consolidating a new communist party, placing himself at the top of the party structure in order to protect his reforms and secure his Martíán ideology as the cornerstone of the new Cuban Communist Party.

Early Reforms and Influence from PSP, 1959-1960

When Castro addressed crowds throughout Cuba in the first week of January in 1959, the revolution was officially underway. Immediately, a provisional government was set up, as was promised by manifestos from the Sierra Maestra during the war. The structure that this government took was that of a republic: Manuel Urrutia, a liberal judge, was the man Castro had handpicked to become the president.²¹¹ Urrutia, who was given the power to choose his cabinet, chose almost exclusively from the liberal wing of the 26th of July Movement, as well as from select *Ortodoxo* politicians. The task now, as Castro related to audiences following the victory over Batista, was to begin implementing the Martíán reforms that he had promised, drastically altering the structure of Cuban society and transforming the political system completely. Though

²¹¹ Szulc, *Fidel*, 466.

Castro was not named a part of the cabinet, he still retained his post as Commander in Chief of the armed forces, keeping himself and the radical faction of his movement involved in the decision making.

But to say that Castro was merely involved in the decision-making is an understatement: upon the military defeat of Batista, Castro was the only person in the opposition forces that the masses knew and identified with. Whether holding a position in the government or not, it was his movement that installed the provisional government and Castro himself who held true revolutionary power. Because of this, the transitory aspect of the provisional government was visible almost immediately, as it was certain that Castro would not allow political moderates to co-opt his revolution again. In his victory speech to Santiago de Cuba, the necessity of ensuring that Martí's revolutionary vision was both fulfilled and maintained was emphasized when he stated, "[n]ever have we let ourselves be carried away by vanity or ambition, because, as our Apostle said, 'all the glories of the world vanish like a grain of maize.'"²¹² Whether his audience knew it or not, Castro had a plan to ensure that the "glories" of his revolution would not be so fleeting, which involved the radicalization of the revolution and a closer relationship with the PSP. In order to attain this goal, however, Castro recognized the need for this process to be gradual.²¹³

In order to allow the radicalization of the revolution to be gradual, Castro kept his relationship with the PSP secretive initially.²¹⁴ Without any governmental responsibilities, Castro used his time to plan the future of the revolution, which he did alongside the radical elements of the M-26-7 as well as the PSP leadership. Though, ideologically, there were many differences

²¹² Fidel Castro quoted in Rice, *Rhetorical Uses*, 78.

²¹³ Szulc, *Fidel*, 467.

²¹⁴ However, PSP support for the revolution was publically exclaimed. See Partido Socialista Popular, *La Solución Que Conviene a Cuba* (Havana: PSP, 1958), 1-3.

between the two groups, they both agreed that in order for the revolution to progress, it needed to become more radical and unified.²¹⁵ Meeting clandestinely, these groups decided upon future reforms for the revolution, working primarily on a more radical version of the agrarian reform law issued by Castro while in the Sierra Maestra.²¹⁶ Above all, Castro's goal for forging the future of the revolution with the PSP was the prospect of creating a unified revolutionary coalition, as Martí had done in 1892, using the organization of the PSP, as its membership was experienced and its structure established (unlike the M-26-7). Using this party apparatus, Castro hoped to advance the revolution in order to fulfill his anti-imperialist, Martían revolution.²¹⁷

After having secured the radical support of the PSP and the use of the party organization when it was needed, Castro sought to begin the process of implementing his reforms and radicalizing the revolution. In order to meet this end, Castro secured nomination as the Prime Minister of Cuba after he convinced Urrutia of the inadequacies of the moderate Prime Minister, José Miró Cardona.²¹⁸ Following Cardona's resignation, Castro assumed power on February 16, 1959, fusing revolutionary power with the government. Though Castro continued to preach moderation for the time being, an article published upon securing power, written by a radical member of the 26th of July Movement (most likely at Castro's request), spoke of the revolution to come. In the piece entitled "The Permanent Revolution," it was related that the true revolution started the day that Castro assumed the duties of Prime Minister, giving the people legitimate power in the government.²¹⁹ Following this elaboration, a revolutionary program was laid out in 20 points, looking strikingly like previous M-26-7 documents, but with a more radical slant.

²¹⁵ The PSP was an "old guard," Stalinist party that (traditionally) opposed the subjective revolution that Castro and his bourgeois revolutionaries had undertaken. See Andrés Suárez, *Cuba: Castroism and Communism, 1959-1966* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1967), 32.

²¹⁶ Szulc, *Fidel*, 476.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 467.

²¹⁸ Suárez, *Castroism and Communism*, 43.

²¹⁹ Marcelo Fernández, "The Permanent Revolution," in *Revolución*: February 16, 1959.

These reforms included the exact reforms that Martí had wished to implement upon his victory, continuing to display Martí as the author of the revolution, while no mention was made to communism. These reforms included land reform (the cornerstone of revolutionary legislation), educational reform, restructuring politics and the military, raising of wages, lowering of rents, and nationalization of foreign property to combat imperialism.²²⁰ Additionally, the need for revolutionary unity under the leadership of the 26th of July Movement in order to ensure that the revolution was, in fact, permanent and comprehensive is emphasized. In this article, social revolution was alluded to publically for the first time. In fact, the article makes no mention of the Constitution of 1940, which Castro was clearly against re-implementing in previous documents. It was even implied that elections should not be a part of the program at the given time, as a social revolution would need revolutionary power in the government to ensure its realization. With a revolutionary plan laid out, Castro could now begin his Martíán revolutionary reforms.

Though the land reform law was to be the most important undertaking of the revolutionary government, the climate was not ready for such radical legislation. In the meantime other reforms were put into practice, borrowing from Martí's revolutionary vision. Within the first year of the revolution, there were laws to secure racial equality, workers' rights, higher wages, and the beginning of educational reform in order to eradicate illiteracy. Rents were also lowered across the country amid outcries from the upper class and U.S. owned utilities.²²¹ Additionally, militias were organized independent of the Rebel Army. Castro disagreed with the idea of a large standing army (as Martí did before him) because he believed it would lead to tyranny and instability. Elimination of the traditional army structure was a necessary undertaking

²²⁰ Fernández, "The Permanent Revolution."

²²¹ Suárez, *Castroism and Communism*, 44.

to create a social revolution.²²² After all, Batista's coup d'états were a result of a large army. In order to combat this, Castro believed that military command should be centralized within the Rebel Army, but the power was to be shared with the people.²²³

Perhaps most central to Castro's plans in the early stages of the revolution was the Martían idea of revolutionary unity. Ever since the failed general strike of 1958, Castro had been emphasizing the need for unity in the revolutionary ranks. While this was a sign of wishing to gain more support generally, the appeals to unity came at a time when Castro was first seeking more radical support for his revolution, specifically from the PSP. With that in mind, in the post-war revolutionary atmosphere of Cuba, where the PSP and the 26th of July Movement were the only viable political organizations, Castro was most likely pushing for popular support of not just the revolution, but the PSP as well. Through advocating the "unity line," Castro and the PSP were publically getting much closer; many members of the PSP began to join the revolutionary ranks of the M-26-7, and many movement members began adopting Marxist stances.²²⁴ By pushing "unity" on the masses, and by proxy the PSP, Castro was arguably seeking to shift the popular opinion towards his more radical views in order to ensure he would be able to fulfill Martí's vision. This would have a backlash among the liberal provisional government and moderate members of the 26th of July Movement.

In the midst of the more moderate reforms, Castro unveiled the agrarian reform law that was written with the assistance of the PSP earlier in 1959. Though the law had little to no input from the public, Castro had learned from his time spent with the peasants of the Sierra Maestra (as well as from Martí) that land reform was the greatest desire of the peasants and was essential

²²² Samuel Farber, *Origins of the Cuban Revolution Reconsidered* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 119.

²²³ Szulc, *Fidel*, 506. A note in *Cuba: Castroism and Communism* suggests that this program was short lived. (Suaréz, *Castroism and Communism*, 78.)

²²⁴ Farber, *Origins*, 162.

in transforming the peasantry into a revolutionary class. As a result, the law became the cornerstone of his revolutionary achievements. Passed by the provisional government on May 17, 1959, the law put a maximum cap on land ownership at 400 hectares, stating that any titles over this amount would be expropriated to be distributed to tenants.²²⁵ Additionally, these tenants and new farmers would be granted ownership of the land, a distinctly non-Marxist idea.²²⁶ Under the law, the majority of peasants in Cuba would be benefitted, creating some 200,000 new farmers.²²⁷ It would also serve to deal a blow to *latifundium*, confiscating unused land all over Cuba (especially from U.S. corporations) and redistributing it.²²⁸

The law also created the Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria (National Institute of Agrarian Reform – INRA), an apparatus with almost unlimited power headed by Castro himself. This organization was now the acting government in charge of most revolutionary reforms. Its far reaching power and radical membership made it the ideal tool to act as a vanguard of the social revolution. With the formation of the INRA and the implementation of the agrarian reform law, the revolution officially and publically changed from a movement to overthrow a tyrant to a revolution that would fundamentally change the social and economic structure of Cuba. With the wave of popular support that resulted from the new reform, the power of the revolution was definitively in radical control; the INRA, with Castro’s leadership and PSP support, held the revolutionary power.

Upon realizing the growing relationship between Castro and his new-found radical ally, the liberal members of the M-26-7 protested the PSP being included in revolutionary decisions. These members, the same *llano* membership that supported the general strike and the restoration

²²⁵ Suárez, *Castroism and Communism*, 53.

²²⁶ At no point in the legislation is collectivization referred to. See Szulc, *Fidel*, 494.

²²⁷ Suárez, *Castroism and Communism*, 54.

²²⁸ Szulc, *Fidel*, 493.

of the Constitution of 1940, berated the PSP for not supporting the revolutionary war effort and denounced Castro for working with them. Castro, who was appalled at the audacity of his movement members, removed them from their posts for acting against the unity of the revolution. These sentiments began to crop up in the cabinet of the provisional government over the course of 1959, leading in June to what certain Cuban Revolutionary scholars refer to as a purge.²²⁹ In June 1959, Castro ordered the reorganization of the cabinet, eliminating members of the M-26-7 who had spoken out against the INRA as being too radical as well as members who Castro identified as “Plattist,” who were then replaced with radicals and PSP members.²³⁰ Following this perceived injustice, President Urrutia denounced the Communist Party and Castro’s seeming affinity for them. Believing that these counterrevolutionary ideas would disseminate to the masses coming from the president, whose duties at that point had been reduced to a rubber stamp, Castro resigned as Prime Minister and let the people decide who was right.²³¹ After just one day, masses of people demanded Castro’s return and for Urrutia to be replaced with someone Castro would agree with more. Urrutia was replaced by Osvaldo Dorticós, an ex-communist and radical supporter of Fidel. Not only did the removal of President Urrutia and other liberals lead to more radicalism and a solidification of the PSP as part of the course of the revolution, it emphasized Castro’s absolute revolutionary power and the degree to which the masses were infatuated with him.

Having secured more popular support for his radical Martíán reforms and a more receptive cabinet, Castro began implementing another aspect of Martí’s ideology more seriously: anti-imperialism. In order to do this, Castro sought to reduce U.S. influence on the island significantly, a step towards realizing Martí’s dream of a truly independent Cuba. Though Castro

²²⁹ Suárez, *Castroism and Communism*, 67.

²³⁰ See note 27 in Suárez, *Castroism and Communism*, 67.

²³¹ Szulc, *Fidel*, 505.

wished to do this gradually, the U.S.'s indignation for the Cuban Revolution was becoming an obstacle for Castro. In June, the Eisenhower administration had eliminated the sugar quota, which was an agreement to purchase a large sum of sugar from Cuba every year, in reaction to the agrarian reform law and further radicalization of the revolution.²³² Reacting to this, Castro promised that if the U.S. would not buy Cuban sugar, the U.S. would begin to lose their sugar mills to nationalization.²³³ Though nationalizations would not take place until 1960, the threat from Castro intensified the radicalization of the revolution and the popular support for it. However, not everyone in Cuba agreed with these new radical reforms. More members of the liberal wing of the 26th of July Movement resigned from their posts, seeing these policies as having been influenced by the communists.²³⁴ Castro welcomed these resignations, however, because it further proved to him that the liberal faction of his movement did not truly wish to realize Martí's revolutionary vision and would put his revolution in danger. In addition, this new policy of nationalizing U.S. businesses made the hostilities between the United States and the Cuban Revolution grow exponentially. The U.S. had cut off diplomatic ties with Cuba by February of 1960, ending any commitment the U.S. had to nonintervention.²³⁵ By August of the same year, all U.S. holdings were in control of the INRA. Martí's dream of a truly independent Cuba had finally been realized more than half a century later than he had originally intended. However, unbeknownst to Castro, the U.S. was already planning a military operation to overthrow the revolution in response to the deterioration of relations between the two countries.

²³² Philip Bonsal, *Cuba, Castro, and the United States* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1971), 151.

²³³ Suárez, *Castroism and Communism*, 94-95.

²³⁴ In actuality, the PSP were not in favor of nationalizing all industries, as they say that moderate capitalism was needed for economic purposes. This was now the Soviet line on states moving towards socialism. See Partido Socialista Popular, *La Solución*, 8-9.

²³⁵ Ambassador Bonsal, a liberal diplomat, was convinced that the U.S. could work with Cuba if only they did not aggravate the situation between the radical factions within Castro's government. See Bonsal, *Cuba, Castro, and the United States*, 161.

Bay of Pigs and Declaration of the “Socialist Nature of the Revolution,” 1960-1961

The growing hostilities between Castro and the United States continued to escalate throughout 1960. Castro, refusing to budge on the issue of nationalization, used the hostilities to move the revolution in an even more radical direction. As a result, divisions began to surface between Castro and the PSP. Before the revolution started, the PSP advocated much more radical reforms than Castro was comfortable with at the time. However, with the implementation of Castro's efforts to combat American imperialism, Castro's Martían vision became more revolutionary than the communist party's.²³⁶ The PSP was more concerned with following the Soviet party line, which advocated working within the existing political system to prepare a society for socialism. For these reasons, the PSP was against shifting the status quo so early in the revolution, advocating against Castro's fight against imperialism in favor of preserving certain capitalist edifices that would benefit the revolution.²³⁷ Castro, however, saw the opportunity to move his revolution towards its end goal of realizing Martí's ideals and used the hostile climate between the U.S. and Cuba to do so. At this juncture, Castro and the radical members of his movement became much more radical than the PSP, especially because they did not have to answer to a foreign party line. This was the beginning of a division that would put those who advocated unique Cuban solutions to revolutionary reforms (Castro, radical M-26-7, young PSP members) and those who wished to follow the Stalinist party line of the USSR (the “old guard” PSP members) against one another.

Though Castro used the hostilities between Cuba and the United States to rationalize the continued radicalization of his revolution, this does not mean he was not prepared for an inevitable retaliation. As early as 1959, Castro had been preparing his Rebel Army and militias

²³⁶ Farber, *Origins*, 138.

²³⁷ Suárez, *Castroism and Communism*, 107. These PSP views on nationalization are spelled out in more detail their revolutionary program of 1958: Partido Socialista Popular, *La Solución*, 1-15.

for an invasion from Cuba's neighbor to the north, buying modern arms from wherever he could and training his men so they would be ready.²³⁸ Training intensified in October of 1960 following a U.S. economic embargo on Cuba.²³⁹ Unbeknownst to Castro, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had been training a group of exiled Cubans in preparation for an attack on his revolution, which had been ordered by the Eisenhower Administration. Upon John F. Kennedy's inauguration in January 1961, he was briefed on the operation and set the date of its execution for April 17th.²⁴⁰

On the morning of April 17th, the United States sent planes to begin bombing Cuban military strongholds; Castro knew the attack was near. However, between the expertise of his Rebel Army, the size of his militias, and the inability of the invaders to destroy the tiny Cuban air force, the attack was a total failure. The CIA, after taking damage to its command ship, ordered its fleet to retreat, abandoning 1,500 men on the island in the Bay of Pigs with no reinforcements and no hope of victory.²⁴¹ By April 19th, the Rebel Army had effectively routed the entire invading force, humiliating the U.S. by giving the world proof of its imperialist intentions. In addition, the attack gave Castro an opportunity to further radicalize his revolution; on April 17th, the day of the attack, Castro announced the "socialist nature" of the revolution.²⁴²

While certain scholars state that Castro's declaration of the socialist nature of the revolution was a result of U.S. aggression at the Bay of Pigs, this interpretation ignores the trends toward radicalization that were already present. Rather, with the wave of popular support for Castro as a result of the invasion, Castro felt confident in his ability to move the revolution

²³⁸ Szulc, *Fidel*, 498.

²³⁹ Farber, *Origins*, 86

²⁴⁰ The date was originally February 2nd, then April 5th, then April 17th was decided upon. See Suárez, *Castroism and Communism*, 122.

²⁴¹ Balfour, *Castro*, 70.

²⁴² Fidel Castro, "Colon Cemetery, Havana, April 17, 1961" in *The Fidel Castro Reader*, ed. David Deutschmann (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 2007), 189-93.

into still more radical waters in order to ensure that the Martí's revolutionary vision would be protected. Though Martí's dream had been fulfilled with the nationalization of U.S. interests on the island, the Bay of Pigs invasion was the nail in the coffin of imperialism in Cuba. Now, with Cuba free of U.S. imperial influence, Castro arguably felt the need to take measures to ensure that his previous Martían reforms and anti-imperialism would be protected. To ensure this, the road he had chosen was communism.

This view was exemplified in Castro's May Day speech, given just weeks after the attack at the Bay of Pigs. In this speech, Castro reaffirmed the course of the revolution towards Marxism and its socialist nature throughout. However, he did not do so in typical Marxist fashion, but alluded to Martí while tying the "socialist revolution" to Cuban history:

It was custom to talk about the motherland; there were some who had a wrong idea of the motherland. There was the motherland of the privileged ones... while others live in hovels. What motherland did you have in mind, sir?... The motherland of today where we have won the right to direct our own destiny... a motherland which will be, now and forever – *as Martí wanted it* – for the wellbeing of everyone and not a motherland of the few!²⁴³

By including Martí in this speech, Castro not only continued to display that Martí was the intellectual author of the revolution, but he combined the idea of a socialist revolution with the ideology of Martí. Though many disagree with Castro and suggest he was putting words in Martí's mouth, it was more important to Castro to be following Martí's example than Marx's. That fact was illustrated throughout the whole of the speech, continually making reference to the motherland, Martí, and the fight against imperialism but rarely making reference to class

²⁴³ Fidel Castro, "The Year of Education" in *Fidel Castro Speaks*, eds. Martin Kenner and James Petras (New York: Grove Press, 1969), 80. Italics for emphasis.

struggle, workers, and only mentioning the fight against capitalism once (and vaguely).²⁴⁴

Though Castro alluded to the idea that a revolution “as Martí wanted it” was a socialist revolution, he provided justification for socialism historically. In arguing that governments must work for a specific country and specific conditions, Castro stated that the Constitution of 1940 was already “old and outdated for us” and did not speak to the specific conditions of Cuba any longer.²⁴⁵ Alternatively, a new constitution was needed that spoke to these specific conditions, which would be a socialist constitution that would protect all of the new reforms that had been passed and would be passed still.

More importantly, in this speech Castro made assertions about elections that seemed to suggest that the choice of socialism was strategic in order to protect his Martíán vision. In discussing the old political order, Castro stated that the old political parties were simply a manifestation of wealth in politics: those who had the most money had the most say. For these reasons, Castro stated that “the Revolution has no time to waste in such foolishness,” for the old ruling class could potentially rise again and overturn the progress already made.²⁴⁶ This was very similar to what occurred as a result of the failed general strike in 1958: Castro likely wished to radicalize the revolution further in order to safeguard the Martíán reforms he had already implemented from liberals and opportunistic politicians, just as he had done to protect the future of the revolution from the *llano* leadership in 1958. To this effect, to suggest that Martí would have wanted a socialist revolution was not such a stretch when it is looked at as a strategic move to ensure the preservation of the revolution and its reforms. However, this declaration put Castro at the forefront of the road to communism, making the PSP fear their relevance to the revolution.

²⁴⁴ Castro, “The Year of Education,” 87-88.

²⁴⁵ This is the first document I am aware of that Castro definitively states he would not re-implement the Constitution of 1940. See Castro, “The Year of Education,” 87.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

The New Communist Party, 1961

Following the declaration of socialism, Castro experienced a wave of popular support as he had not seen before. Rallying around the victory at the Bay of Pigs, the country was euphoric and ready for the next phase of the revolution, no matter what form it took; the saying “[i]f Fidel is a communist then I’m one too” became the popular justification of the shift towards a Marxist society.²⁴⁷ With the majority of the country behind him and recognizing him as the face of socialism, Castro was the popular symbol of the socialist revolution now, not the unpopular PSP. This profound change in the power dynamics between Castro and PSP made the radical path of communism the popular one and gave Castro revolutionary power not only over the PSP, but over the leadership of the communist movement in Cuba. With this power, Castro began consolidating the communist path of his Martían revolution under a new, unified party. As the new leader of the Cuban communist movement, Castro could create a *Cuban* communist party; that is, a party that advocated a uniquely Cuban revolution that would not be subordinate to a foreign party line and would put the principles of Martí equal to or above those of Marx.

As was proposed earlier when Castro and the PSP were meeting clandestinely, the process of forming a unified communist party using the PSP organization as its root was now underway after Castro’s May 1961 speech. By July of 1961, the Organizaciones Revolucionarias Integradas (Integrated Revolutionary Organization – ORI) was created, which included the 26th of July Movement, the PSP, and select members of the Students Revolutionary Directorate. This effectively marked the dissolution of the PSP as a political party.²⁴⁸ This organization acted as the new, unified communist party in Cuba, fulfilling the idea of revolutionary unity as Martí

²⁴⁷ Suárez, *Castroism and Communism*, 112.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 128-29.

proposed. However, with Castro as its leader, who many in the PSP still considered to be a bourgeois nationalist, tensions began to surface in the new party.

The “old guard” communists in the PSP (those who followed the Soviet, orthodox, line most closely) began to resent the leadership of Castro. Though it had been agreed upon that the coalition would use the party structure of the PSP, Blas Roca, the leader of the PSP, was under the impression that *he* would be in charge of any new communist party. When it was clear that he would be subordinate to a man who he (still) deemed to be a bourgeois nationalist, Roca and other old guard members of the PSP began to protest the new party and what it stood for. The most important objection to Castro’s leadership of the new communist movement was an ideological consideration. Orthodox communists, like Roca and the Soviet Union, did not support the declaration of socialism in Cuba because it was not ready for communism.²⁴⁹ Simply stated, orthodox communists believed that the path towards a communist society must follow the basic steps laid out in writing by Marx and by Lenin’s example. Castro, however, was still clearly of the Martían mindset that a radical revolution, be it communist or otherwise, must work within the conditions of that specific country and should not be dictated so rigidly by “stages.” Likewise, Roca objected strongly to the idea of a uniquely Cuban solution for these same ideological reasons. This is why he rejected the nationalization of U.S. property so soon, as he believed that Cuba still needed some elements of capitalism in order to transition to communism.²⁵⁰ Castro, on the other hand, was reacting to the capitalism of the U.S. in strictly Cuban terms; the nationalization of U.S. property was more a symbolic attack on imperialism in order to fulfill Martí’s unfinished revolution than it was a direct attack on Americans or capitalism. Additionally, the declaration of socialism was to reinvent the motherland “as Martí

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 125-27.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 62-63

wanted it,” not to follow orthodox Marxism. These two schools of thought were opposed to each other from the first day that Castro and the PSP began working together but only came to the forefront with their integration. For these reasons, Castro began rejecting the old guard in favor of those who better understood his revolutionary vision.

Following the formation of the ORI, the so called “young ones” began to emerge from the shadows of the old guard communists and rose to prominence under the power of Castro. Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, the leader of this break-away faction of the PSP, had been the only ranking member of the PSP to visit Castro’s guerrillas in the Sierra Maestra for extended periods of time. It is likely that by building a revolutionary relationship with the 26th of July Movement, Rodríguez became a convinced *Fidelista* and was more willing to make ideological compromises for the success of the revolution. In post-revolutionary Cuba, however, Roca became aware of Rodríguez’s affinity for Castro and his movement, and as such, had his role in the party diminished to editor of the PSP journal, *Hoy*.²⁵¹ Rodríguez remained in his subordinate position until the unification in July 1961. At this time, with Castro in charge, members of the PSP that sympathized with Castro (like Rodríguez) became crucial members of the coalition and were essential in facilitating the fusion of the M-26-7 with the PSP into a new communist party.²⁵² The formation of such a party would be orchestrated by Castro along Cuban/Martían lines in addition to Marxist ideology in order to form a uniquely Cuban communism.

With the dissolution of the PSP and the beginning of a new Cuban communist coalition, Castro made the ideology of Marxism work for his own Martían principles, and not the other way around. Castro, who arguably declared the socialist nature of the Cuban revolution in order to protect Martí’s revolutionary vision, was much more concerned with preserving the reforms

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

²⁵² Szulc, *Fidel*, 62.

already implemented than working towards an orthodox Marxist society. Though the revolution was set in motion towards Soviet style communism, irreconcilable differences between Cuba and the United States, and dependence on the Soviet Union, Castro continued to stress the importance of Martí to the revolution and strove to protect his revolutionary vision. Although Castro now considered himself to be a Marxist, Martí came first for himself and for Cuba as the author of their revolution.

Concluding Remarks

In this thesis, I have attempted to offer an interpretation of the Cuban road to communism that differs from the existing literature on the subject. Taking into account Castro's devotion to the ideals of José Martí from his political awakening at the University of Havana through the declaration of the Marxist nature of the revolution, it has been argued that Castro moved his revolution towards communism in an effort to fulfill Martí's unfinished revolution. In doing so, I have addressed the historical factors that led Castro to his Martían ideology, arguing that Castro's revolution was a direct result of Cuban history and the revolutionary legacy of Martí. In addition, I have displayed that Martí's influence can be found in both Castro's writings and speeches, as well as official documents of the 26th of July Movement, citing Martí as the ideological author of the Cuban Revolution. I argued that Castro's decision to radicalize the revolution, which led to a strategic relationship between Castro and the PSP, was done in order to safeguard the future of the revolution by allying with a group that also sought to destroy the old political order. Finally, the declaration of the Marxist nature of the revolution was addressed as a necessity in order to fulfill Martí's vision of an independent Cuba.

While this view is not prevalent in the literature on the Cuban Revolution, I believe that Castro's efforts to emulate Martí in his revolutionary actions, his careful use of Martí's ideas in important speeches and documents throughout the revolution, and his justification of the shift towards socialism based on the principles of Martí display that Castro's goals were undeniably linked to Martí and Cuban history. Castro arguably saw himself as the prophet of Martí's centennial, wishing to address Cuba's psychological need to fulfill the revolutionary vision of the Apostle.²⁵³ In order to meet this end, political circumstances presented themselves to Castro,

²⁵³ Benjamin, *United States and Cuba*, 12.

which persuaded him of the need to, first, ally with a strong radical political party, and ultimately declare the socialist nature of the revolution and form a new *Cuban* Communist Party, which would be at least equal parts Martí as Marxist.

While I believe that my argument is valid and offers a relevant progression of the Cuban road to communism, it is less able to speak for the decades following the declaration of the Marxist nature of the revolution. Why did Castro believe that imperialism from the Soviet Union was more desirable than from the United States? Where in Martí's message did Castro find justification for repression, censorship, and inequality? At what point did Castro begin to use Martí as a tool to sanction actions that were blatantly anti-Martían? With these inconsistencies aside, Martí still holds an important place in Cuban revolutionary history and continues to be referred to as the father of Castro's Cuban Revolution. Even when Castro spoke of Marxism and socialism in front of audiences, it was done in front of a bust of Martí, not Marx, similar to the busts that guard all public schools in Cuba.²⁵⁴ Nationalism, anti-imperialism, and unity continue to be important principles in Cuba. Likewise, Cubans continue to embrace their history and the revolutionary tradition of Martí above Marxism.²⁵⁵

The influence of Martí on Castro and his revolution is undeniable. Though there is little consensus on what caused the shift from radical nationalism to communism, it is not likely that this decision was made completely independent of the ideals of Martí. While Castro did not necessarily hold true to his Martí roots much beyond the declaration of Marxism, Martí continues to be an important figure in Cuba. Understanding the shift towards communism as a result of Castro's devotion to the ideology of Martí gives the Cuban Revolution historical justification and emphasizes the important role that Cuban history played in the revolution's

²⁵⁴ Szulc, *Fidel*, 21.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

implementation. Additionally, with the inevitable transfer of power following Castro's death, it is likely that Martí's ideals will have a renaissance, which could potentially lead to a reevaluation of Castro's rule following the declaration of socialism, reinventing Martí's revolutionary spirit for the benefit of Cuba. Whether or not this comes to pass, Martí will continue to be an important figure to all Cubans and his lasting legacy through Castro will never be forgotten.

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