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## CUBAN REVOLUTION

### **Historical Background**

Cuba is the most oversized island in the sea of the Caribbean. It has a population of approximately even million persons. From the year 1492 up to the year 1899, Cuba was Caribbean ownership of Spain. It (Cuba), therefore, fought a series of wars against Spain in order for it to gains independence. The 3<sup>rd</sup> conflict involved the U.S., which in turn was termed the Spanish-American War. Spain was defeated in the War, and this set Cuba free from Spanish rule, although the United States would control it for three years, till the year 1902. During this time, many improvements were made in the health sector, and the public works and lots of American industries were stabled in Cuba. Though Cuba attained its freedom from Spain in 1902, the United States was still excessively entangled in the nation and could even intrude the nation's military. However, all the American businesses operating in Cuba grew very fast hence dominating Cuba's Exports. This left Cuba nearly dependent on only one crop: Sugar and one market in the United States. The planned crime was also rooted in Cuba, which is suitably located near Florida and way to South and Central America.

Moreover, Cuban leaders (presidents) were very corrupt, resulting in many uprisings and rebellions. In the year 1940, Fulgencio Batista, an army officer, was elected to be Cuba's president.

Batista was a progressive leader during his first term of presidency. He pledged to support democracy as well as bringing improvements to the living standards of the Cuban citizens. In the 1944 elections, Batista didn't contest for the presidency, though all the candidates he chose did not win the elections. In 1952, Batista stood for the presidential seat only to realize that he wouldn't win the elections. After realizing this, he launched a coup hence taking power for himself. Correspondingly, a young lawyer known as Fidel Castro, was standing for a position in the house of representatives in the same year (1952). So, when Fulgencio Batista called off the elections, Fidel tried using the law to remove him from power. All these Castro attempts failed, which provoked him towards launching an armed revolution to set Cuba free from Fulgencio's dictator leadership. "The Cuban Revolution." (Hammond 301).

### **The Cuban Revolution**

The Cuban revolution was conducted by Fidel Castro, together with his brothers. They founded an origination known as the Movement in 1952. The campaign had gained a lot of members as well as a supply of weapons towards the end of the year (1952). The revolution then started its operation on 26<sup>Jul.</sup> 1953 whereby it (the Movement) attacked the Moncada Barracks in Santiago. Out of 160 people who conducted the attack, almost all were either captured or murdered. Fidel and his brother Raul Castro were amongst the twenty rebels who managed to escape to Sierra Maestra mountains. Nevertheless, Batista managed to round up the escapees and Fidel quickly, and his brother was arrested and imprisoned. In 1954, another presidential election was conducted, and Batista was elected to be the president with no sort of opposition. Regardless of how Fulgencio had acquired his powers, his government was recognized by the U.S. Throughout the elections, Fidel's followers had campaigned for his release. Since Batista felt that he had all the powers and that Castro's Movement didn't threaten him any longer, he agreed to set him free together with his

brothers and other political prisoners. It was May 1955 when they left prison, and Fidel, his brothers, and other fellow revolutionaries fled to Mexico since they felt that their freedom in Batista's government was under restriction. Later on, the 26 July Movement was renewed along Marxist Leninist lines, becoming the Communist Party, Cuba. This happens in October 1965. However, the Cuban Revolution was inspired by political, economic, and social issues, as discussed below.

Political factors. The political factors that inspired the Cuban Movement were; the rule of Fulgencio Batista, the United States, the formation of the Republic of Cuba and liberation, instability, and the continuous United States intervention. Firstly, the United States decree and the formation of the Republic of Cuba. This happened after <sup>1</sup>the Spanish-American War, whereby America gained <sup>1</sup>control of Cuba after defeating <sup>1</sup>Spain. The military of the United States now governed Cuba. During this time, Cuban citizens were given more positions in the offices which preceded those of Spain during the Spanish Regime. From 5<sup>Nov.</sup> 1900 to 21<sup>Feb.</sup> 1901, there was a constitutional convention that was met at Havana. This convention resulted in the adoption of a constitution that comprised of various provisions termed the Platt Amendment. The United States executed the Platt Amendment as a requirement for supporting the constitution. These amendments were later accepted on 12<sup>Jun.</sup> 1901 by Cuba ("Cuban Revolution, Britannica"). Through the provisions, Cuba had assured not to experience arrears that its incomes couldn't support, to proceed with the hygienic administration that was started by the military Regime of the United States, to allow <sup>1</sup>the U.S. to mediate so as to preserve the independence of Cuba, and to let naval station to the United States. In May the year 1902, the Republic of Cuba's first president was elected, Tomas Estrada Palma. During Estrada's reign, material prosperity was enjoyed by particular parts <sup>1</sup>of the Cuban people. This was caused by the reciprocal trade treaty that was demanded by the departing

authorities of the U.S. The treaty allowed <sup>1</sup>more Cuban Sugar to be exported to the U.S, which meant that the U.S would control the economy of Cuba all through the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the twentieth century.

Secondly, another political factor that inspired the Cuban Revolution is liberation, instability, and constant United States intervention. Estrada's government tried to instrument liberal measures, though <sup>1</sup>it was inundated by instability. His party, known as the Conservatives but later changed to Moderates, won in December elections, was held in 1905. Although Palma's party emerged as the winner in the polls, it was accused of rigging votes by the opposition party. This charge, together with extensive pension deception and lack of proposed administrative reforms, prompted a revolution in the month of <sup>1</sup>July 1906. The revolt spread quickly, and Estrada demanded involvement by the United States, which in turn sent representatives to mediate. Estrada resigned from the presidency seat after the mediation failed. William Howard Taft was then named to be Cuba's governor by Theodore Roosevelt on 29<sup>Sept.</sup> 1906. Howard declared that he would lead Cuba as long as he would reinstate public confidence, peace, and order. Later on, on 1<sup>Apr.</sup> 1909 Cuba regained its freedom when the United States troops were withdrawn from the country.

Cuba was governed by three presidents from the year <sup>1</sup>1909 to 1925 with minor distinction and copious bribery. They (presidents) included Jose Miguel Gomez, who led from 1909 to 1913, then followed by Mario Garcia Menocal, who ruled from 1913 to 1921, and finally Alfredo Zayas Alfonso, who led from 1921 to 1925. All through this period, the United States interfered two times in Cuba and threatened to intrude numerous times. Throughout Miguel's government, the nation prospered through corruption cases increased. The administration was blamed for offering fewer offices to the Afro-Cuban people as well as giving favours to the people who had given support to the Spanish during the fight for independence. This led to the rising of the protest,

which was against a rule eliminating political organization either by religion or race. The demonstrations led to the bloodshed, which cost thousands of humans' lives. In the 1912 elections, Menocal won the presidential seat after splitting the Liberal party. Garcia Menocal's government directed a lot of material growth, though the government was charged with corruption issues as well as nepotism. In 1916, Menocal was re-elected through the use of deception and violence. As a result, Cuba experienced a war break out in February the year 1917, which was against Menocal. He (Menocal) could stop the revolt since the U.S didn't intervene, though the rebels hoped it would intervene.

Till 1919, Cuba experienced remarkable prosperity brought about by the high prices of Sugar. However, by 1920, it experiences an acute financial crisis with many banks and other businesses going bankrupt. Economic reforms were introduced in the country by Zayas, and the U.S loaned the country fifty million dollars. This happened in January 1923. As a result, the economy of Cuba started to improve rapidly, although corruption charges against Zayas amplified. People rebelled against Zayas, and he also faced a lot of opposition from his party during the renomination period. Zayas then made an agreement against Menocal with Gerardo Machado, who was the liberal candidate. On 20 May 1925, Gerardo assumed the office presidency after being elected devastatingly. He only ruled well during the first term of service. In 1928 during the start of his 2<sup>nd</sup> term, a rule of terror started. The proclamation of martial law followed this, and Congress gave him permission to freedom of press, assembly, and liberty to speak. Political hostility, alleviated by a qualified distribution of benefaction in 1928, revitalized Gerardo as the financial crisis that hit Cuba in the early 1930s. A trial to stabilize sugar prices way permanently the backbone of the Cuban economy failed, and the country was not receiving any significant relief. Therefore, opposition amplified, and Machado implemented more burdensome approaches against

it. Cuban émigrés escaped to the United States, and as violence continued to increase, the United States offered to intervene. Cuba's economic status continued to crush as Machado still determined to remain in the office regardless of the resignation promises he had given. In August 1933, Machado was forced by the army to flee the nation.

Lastly, the rule of Fulgencio Batista was another political factor that inspired the Cuban Revolution. Cuba had numerous leaders who were typically made and unmade by Batista. He had <sup>1</sup> gained control over the army during the downfall of Machado. Carlos Manuel de Cespedes y Quesada, the son of the Cuban revolutionary leader, became the first president of Cuba to serve under a provisional basis. Cespedes attempted to bring about modest reforms though he was overthrown from his seat since his opponents feared that he was nearly allied to the United States. <sup>1</sup> Ramon Grau San Martin was placed in Cespedes position. San Martin served a period of 4 months, and his efforts to make changes were unsuccessful. A martial junta that Fulgencio headed conferred the presidency to Carlos Mendieta, who was granted prompt recognition by the U.S and other nations. In June 1934, a treaty was concluded under the United States Franklin Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy support. This treaty revoked the Platt Amendment.

Cuba experienced continued strikes and disorder, but then Carlos and Batista (who was the chief staff) used tyrannical measures and kept on postponing elections till 1935 December. Batista continued his ruling via two leaders; <sup>1</sup> Jose Barnet y Vinageras, who ruled from December 1935 to May 1936, and Federico Laredo, who led from December 1936 to October 1940. In May 1936, Miguel Mariano Gomez y Arias voted for and served till December the same year. In 1948, Carlos Prío Socarras became the president of Cuba. His determined domestic plan stuck in the face of administrative corruption and fiscal crisis. In June 1952, Batista overthrew the government with no bloodshed. He was voted for the presidency in 1955 without any opposition and tried to reinstate

normalcy in Cuba though intense hostility grew against him. Revolutionary opposers of Batista denied the legitimacy of the 1955 voting. They then organized operations of nuisance and disruption in the provinces. The leading group was the 26<sup>th</sup> July Movement which all led by Fidel Castro. Therefore, all the above discussed political factors inspired the Cuban Movement.

Social causes. The primary social reasons that inspired the Cuban Revolution were social inequality, unemployment, land ownership, underpayment, and workers' exploitation. Firstly, social inequality was brought about by the seasonal nature of the sugar production industry. The sugar plantations and mills, i.e., Cubans and foreign-owned ones, let their employees go without jobs for a particular part of the year. This, in turn, result in overcrowding of jobless people in the towns who would do any kind of a job they came across with. In 1943 and 1957, the rate of unemployed people was between twenty percent and thirty percent. This, in turn, added up to the presence of social disparity in Cuba.

Secondly, land ownership issues were another social factor that encouraged the Cuban Revolution. The sugar plantation and cattle ranches possessed a third of the whole agricultural land. This left a big group of peasants landless who were usually underemployed, and their earning was a fifth of the total per capita income of Cuba in 1956.

Lastly, the middle-class people were exploited and underpaid in the United States businesses stationed in Cuba. In 1956, the per capita income of the U.S was two thousand U.S dollars annually, while that of Cuba was 374 U.S dollars. Cuba's national statistics relating to the accessibility of communication services and devices, transportation, medical services, and food intake topped the list. This was an image of the Havana tourist industry though it was not spread in all Cuban society. All classes of people felt the pain of lack of fuel as well as food supplies, as

the government couldn't procure them. All, the above social issues annoyed the people, which in turn forced them to protest against Batista.

Economic causes. In the early twentieth century, sugar exportation constituted eighty percent of Cuba's exports which frequently suffered up and down cycles. In the 1930s, the island was a hard hit, especially during the great depression. Although Sugar had low prices compared to the global market value, more stability was present after World War II, when Cuba had a twenty-eight percent market guarantee in the United States market. Cuba had granted the U.S. a safe environment for its businesses. By the third of the twentieth century, it (U.S) controlled seventy-five percent of Cuba's banking and sugar production. The U.S had owned eighty-five percent of all foreign investments in Cuba, which also comprised of the tourism. Cuba was now termed the Caribbean's playground. The population in Cuba was so high that the internal agriculture wouldn't adequately feed them since large pieces of land were used for sugarcane plantations. This forced them to import food. Sugarcane plantations and mills only employed dependent farm laborers and farmers. These employees were just hired during particular times of the year. However, by the mid-twentieth century, the unequal wealth distribution in Cuba was very apparent. Data depicted high incomes amongst professionals, particularly in the medical field. However, the disparities in economic status also played a part in inspiring the Cuban Revolution.

### **Aftermath.**

The aftermath of the revolution in Cuba is a period beginning from 1959 up to 1970. This period comprises early local reforms, rising international tensions, which ended with the failure of sugar harvesting in 1970. In the immediate aftermath of the revolt, in the year 1959, Castro would go to the U.S to ask for assistance. He would also boast of the land reform plans since he believed that the U.S administration would appreciate it. All through 1960, tensions started to escalate

slowly between the U.S and Cuba. This was due to the nationalization of several U.S companies, anti-revolutionary bombarding raids, and revengeful economic sanctions. The United States cut off its diplomatic relationships with Cuba at the beginning of 1961. The Soviet Union had begun to solidify its relationship with Cuba too. The United States was afraid that the Soviet Union would influence Cuba, so it backed up the Bay of Pigs Invasion failure in April 1961. For the first time, in December 1961, Fidel expressed his sympathies openly to the communists. Fidel's feared occurrence of another invasion and his novel Soviet allies, so he decided to put nuclear weaponry in Cuba ultimately triggered the Cuban Missile Crisis. The United States promised never to invade Cuba in the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Additionally, it (the U.S) agreed to withdraw all the aid from Alzados, successfully crippling the resource-starved battle. The ant-revolutionary conflict that was termed the Escambray Rebellion lasted to almost 1965, and ever since, it is usually referred to as the War Against the Bandits by the government of Cuba. According to Jennifer. "The Medium is the Message: The Screen Life of the Cuban Revolution (Pg. 227-267)

In conclusion, as a result of the revolution, Cuba experienced a lot of reforms in all sectors. Starting from the first decade after the revolution, Cuban citizens enjoyed advancement in communication, and there was women's equality, growth in healthcare services and houses, and education. Towards the end of the 1960s, all children in Cuba were able to access education facilities as compared to before. Anti-discrimination laws and general social modifications aided in improving the living standards of all Afro-Cuban citizens. However, after solving the issue of racial integration, the government of Cuba passed a rule that counters confronted former anti-discrimination law. The new rule prohibited even the mentioning of the word discrimination or even the topic regarding ethnic equality. However, the Cuban revolution brought about many

positive impacts to the Cuban people who had gone through a long period of exploitation and poor governance. Fidel Castro played a significant role in trying to fight for the rights of Cuban citizens.

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