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Source: *International Journal on World Peace*, MARCH 1991, Vol. 8, No. 1 (MARCH 1991), pp. 45-61

Published by: Paragon House

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20751650>

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JOSE MARTI AND FIDEL CASTRO

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Fidel Castro claims that he is "like" Jose Marti, the "George Washington" of Cuba. If Marti liberated Cuba from Spain, Castro freed her from the oppressive Batista regime. If Marti was concerned with the suffering of the poor masses, Castro is the concerned leader of the downtrodden. If Marti was anti-American, Castro would claim to be as anti-American as allegedly was Marti. An analysis of Castro's and Marti's life experiences, personalities, and revolutionary values demonstrates that Castro cannot be equated to Jose Marti, the great Cuban patriot and Latin American revolutionary leader.

Introduction

It is being said by Fidel Castro followers, to say nothing of Castro himself, that he is "like" Jose Marti, the great Cuban patriot martyr, apostle, and 19th century liberator of Cuba from Spanish oppression. That means that Castro is as great a Cuban patriot as was Marti.

If Jose Marti was a revolutionary who succeeded in liberating Cuba, Fidel Castro is also a revolutionary who in 1959 liberated Cuba from the oppressive regime of former dictator Fulgencio Batista.

If Marti was a humanitarian concerned with the plight and suffering of the Cuban and Latin American masses, Castro also must be considered to be a benevolent leader concerned with the welfare of the masses, the poor, the downtrodden.

If Marti "knew" the United States of America because, as he put it, he lived in the entrails of the "monster" and found its faults, then Castro would claim that he, too, has found as many or more faults with the United States and, like

Marti, Fidel would be as anti-American as allegedly Marti was.

Today, one reads that Castro's values and beliefs are similar to those of Marti's. For instance, in his *Fidel: A Critical Portrait*, Tad Szulc writes that

An analysis of the family background, way of life, personality, philosophy, and revolutionary values of both, Marti and Castro, would easily demonstrate that Fidel Castro is far from being even close to anything like the great Cuban patriot and apostle of the Cuban revolution and war of independence that was Jose Marti.

“it was....only natural for Fidel Castro to seek the most complete personal identification with Marti's Martyrdom.”¹ Szulc goes on to say that “Castro is truly Marti's direct philosophical and political heir in his views on radicalism, agrarian reform, racial equality, and social justice...Castro and Marti also share fears and suspicions of the United States and its intentions toward Cuba.”²

How true is this image of Fidel Castro in relation to Jose Marti? How similar are Castro's character, personality, and values, political or otherwise, to those of the venerated Cuban apostle? Can Fidel honestly claim Marti's mantle?

The comparison is most spurious. The notion of any similarity between Fidel Castro and Jose Marti has been developed by Castro himself, and promoted by his followers and apologists, in order to gain the support of the Cuban masses in particular and of the Latin American and other publics in general.

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being even close to anything like the great Cuban patriot and apostle of the Cuban revolution and war of independence that was Jose Marti.

Early Life

Unlike Fidel Castro, Jose Marti was the first and only male child of seven children born to a humble, lower middle-income Spanish family. Fidel Castro was the third child of a poor, illiterate immigrant from Spain who,

by the time Fidel was born, had made himself rich in the sugar and lumber industries of Cuba and had become a wealthy landowner.³

Marti's father was a Spanish immigrant who, in 1850, arrived to Cuba at the age of 34 as a member of a Spanish regiment. One of 10 brothers from Valencia, Spain, Mariano Marti Navarro, Jose Marti's father, was merely a corporal in the Spanish army. By February 1852, he had become a sergeant and had married Leonor Perez Cabrera, another Spaniard, from the Canary Islands.

The wedding took place at the church of Nuestra Senora de Monserrate. Jose Marti was born a year later, on January 28, 1853, and within three weeks was baptized at the church of the Santo Angel.

Fidel Castro's father, Angel Castro Argiz, also a Spanish emigre to Cuba from Galicia, Spain, was a "destitute thirteen-year old orphan [who], maltreated at home, left Spain" to join an uncle in the Caribbean Island at that tender age.⁴ It is interesting to note that British historian Hugh Thomas indicated that Angel Castro had come to Cuba with the Spanish army during the Spanish-American War and had always felt that the North Americans, meaning the USA, "had cheated the Spaniards out of a victory over the Cuban rebels." According to Thomas, this originated a violent Hispanic antipathy toward the North American by Angel Castro and evidently by his son Fidel.⁵

At any rate, Fidel Castro was born on August 13, 1926. He was one of the first three children of Angel Castro, allegedly born out of wedlock.⁶ Some six years later, and in order to send his children to Colegio La Salle, directed by the Marianist Brothers, Angel Castro had to agree to a religious marriage and to the baptism and confirmation of the children.⁷ Two more children were later on born to the Castro family. Actually, Angel Castro had been married before and had two children from his first wife.⁸

One cannot make much out of the legitimacy or illegitimacy of Fidel Castro's roots. After all, his father did marry Fidel's mother, Lina Ruz Gonzalez, a girl from Pinar del Rio, the westernmost province of Cuba, who had been working as a cook in the Castro household. Furthermore, and as Richard Gray sarcastically has pointed out, extramarital relations to a Cuban is more often than not nothing to be too concerned about.⁹ Szulc also makes the point that "Fidel's alleged illegitimacy *never* caused him the slightest problem in the tolerant Cuban society."¹⁰

The point is well taken. However, the issue of Fidel's parents background

has to be brought out if one is to compare Castro's life to that of Jose Marti. It is along these lines, precisely, that the differences between Jose Marti and Fidel Castro begin to emerge and take shape.

Jose Marti's father, for instance, used to take the young son with him in his rounds on horseback as captain-judge in the province of Matanzas, east of Havana. In this fashion, Jose Marti, less than 10 years old, became acquainted with the Cuban countryside and the humble peasants of the 30-odd *bohios*, or huts, his father had to visit. As Carlos Marquez Sterling put it, "there was no father prouder of his son than Don Mariano Marti."¹¹

In fact, there seemed to be a constant struggle between Marti's parents about Jose Marti's future. Don Mariano wanted to have his son working with him as much as possible. His mother Leonor wished the young boy to go to a "good" school.

Both parents had discovered the intelligence and resourcefulness of the child, who was utilized by Don Mariano while the mother would hope further to cultivate his young and striking talents. On his own, Jose Marti had begun to write his first verses, the first of which were about, and dedicated to, his mother.¹²

Eventually, Marti's father agreed to have the young boy attend a "good" school, that of San Anacleto, where Jose Marti met and befriended his life-long revolutionary and wealthy companion, Fermin Valdes Dominguez. Less than 10 years old, Marti became concerned about the United States Civil War and the slavery issue. He took the side of the "North" and with Fermin discussed these problems and talked about Lincoln, General Lee, Sherman, freedom, and independence.¹³

By then (1862), Marti had read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and was considered to be a very intelligent, studious, and full of curiosity child who distinguished himself for his good, logical sense.¹⁴ Once the elementary school was over, Marti's father took the young boy back to continue working and traveling with him.

By 1865, Jose Marti's father again gave in to his wife's requests concerning the young Marti's education. He is thus enrolled in one of the best schools of the area, the Rafael Maria Mendive's Colegio de San Pablo. There, Marti finished all courses, including English, French, Latin, mathematics, and geography, with high honors. He also received numerous awards and recognitions, and was exposed to the narratives of Mendive's travels to the United States and Europe.

Jose Marti was greatly influenced by Mendive, “a romantic poet, cosmopolitan and backer of Cuban independence, as well as a schoolmaster,” who offered to support Marti’s high school education.¹⁵ By 1866, he was registered at the Havana Institute of Secondary Education, but still had to work at a grocery store, or *bodega*, to help maintain the home since his father had lost his job.

Marti became closely identified with Rafael Mendive, his mentor, friend, and almost a father. He visited Mendive’s home and became thoroughly acquainted with Cuba’s colonial problems. At the very young age of 14, Jose Marti had learned from Mendive about Cuba’s conditions as a colony of Spain, the need for its independence, the numerous conspiracies against Spain, and about those caught and executed summarily for conspiring.¹⁶

With Fermin Valdes Dominguez and other young Cuban patriots influenced by Mendive and his friends, Jose Marti began in earnest a life consumed by the thought of a free Cuba. He wrote poems, verses, and essays, discussed the independence issue, and published a newspaper. Eventually, his pro-Cuba and anti-Spain attitude had to conflict with his own father. For a while, the relationship between father and son became strained and Mendive tried to smooth it out.

Less than two years later, the young Cuban patriot would pay dearly for playing with revolution. Marti, barely 16 years old, became a prisoner at the brutal prison system of colonial Spain. In his flesh, the mark of the despotic regime would remain forever as a reminder of the cruelty and oppressiveness of the Spanish regime he now had sworn to fight to the end.

Ironically, Marti’s prison experience restored the love and understanding of the Spanish father, who would cry bitter tears of sorrow, frustration,

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and despair in front of the beloved son who at such a tender age had been so inhumanly treated.

Marti's father moved heaven and earth until he got his son out of the infernal stone quarry prison and was safely exiled in Spain.

It is obvious that Jose Marti's early life experience—his first 15 years—seems to have been years of home and family life, of work, study, enlightenment; of the development of a brilliant mind and of a tender heart. Years of growing understanding and love between him and his Spanish father. Years during which the foundation of the forces of liberation that led to the final independence of Cuba from Spain had been laid down. Years during which the young and prolific mind of the future Cuban patriot was nourished, cultivated, and strengthened by other powerful and concerned minds, ideas, and ideals.

The influence and guidance of Jose Marti's mentor and friends could only have led the youthful dreamer in the direction that he, intuitively perhaps, knew was the only one: martyrdom and the freedom of Cuba.

Compared to Jose Marti's early life, Fidel Castro's first years' experiences were of a total and strikingly different nature.

Fidel Castro's character as a child would indicate the violent nature—so contrary to the gentle ways and romantic personality of Jose Marti—of the man today. As Tad Szulc describes him, "from a very young age Castro had to have his way," and when he could not have his way, "he struck back with violence—against his parents, teachers, siblings, and playmates."¹⁷

Unlike Marti, whom no one ever characterized as a violent or authoritarian figure, Castro shows a clear heavy-handed, dictatorial character from early childhood.

While playing baseball, if his team was not winning, "Fidel would simply halt the game and go home."¹⁸ Fidel himself has declared that he has "always been violent, given to tantrums, devious, manipulative, and defiant of all authority."¹⁹ He fought physically not only classmates but even teachers.

According to his biographer, Fidel is proud of telling how he "threw a piece of bread at his head [the teacher's] and started to hit him with [his] fist and bite him."²⁰ Even his brother Raul admits, almost proudly, that Fidel "had a very explosive nature," that he fought every day, and that, when beaten, "he began again the next day."²¹

No such violent, disrespectful behavior has ever been recorded about Jose Marti's childhood or even later as an adult.

Educational Experience

Fidel's schooling is also significant in terms of basic differences between him and Jose Marti. To begin with, Castro lacked the guiding figure, the personality of the scholarly mentor that Marti had as a child. Fidel himself acknowledged that he never had a guide who would help him during his childhood.²²

At the age of five, Fidel and his older sister were sent away from home, away from his parents, to Santiago de Cuba, capital of Oriente province, to study at Colegio La Salle of the Marist Brothers, a private school for rich boys only. There he lived with his godparents, the Hibberts, in whose household "there were no books."²³

Castro was very unhappy in Santiago. According to Szulc, Fidel claims that he "was the victim of some exploitation by this family [Hibberts] that was paid by my parents to have us there."²⁴ He despised the Hibberts to the point of requesting that he be sent to school as a boarder rather than as a day student.

Fidel claims that he behaved terribly in order to be enrolled as a boarder. Nothing indicates, adds Szulc, that Fidel "felt unhappy being away from his parents at such a young age."²⁵

Eventually, Castro's father realized that his children, Ramon, Raul, and, of course, Fidel, were not studying and, worse, that they were cheating with the help of a tutor back home. He decided to take them away from school after Fidel finished his fourth grade.

Fidel, with the help of his mother, persuaded his father to send him back and was enrolled in the fifth grade at Dolores, another boys' school in Santiago, where he was exposed to a Jesuit education. Again, Castro had to stay with another family, which he disliked very much.

It is interesting to note that Fidel, now nine years old, continued to cheat at school. This time he would include his family. He lied to his teachers about losing his school report card with his grades and was given a new one. According to Fidel himself, he "would put [his] grades in the new book and take that one home to be signed—with very good grades in it, of course." To complete the deceitful scheme, Fidel would take back to

school the other card, the one from the school with real grades, after he had signed it himself!

Ironically, Castro claims to be the defender of the poor and the needy, not because he was one, but because he grew up surrounded by poor peasants, played with their children, who had no shoes, and mingled with needy families.

Marti, on the other hand, was always concerned that most of his friends were affluent and dressed much better than he ever did.

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Irrespective of the intelligence and mental prowess of Fidel Castro, there is no question that such dishonest behavior and chicanery early in his school life are diametrically contrary to the integrity of character and honesty of Jose Marti.

By the time he was 11, Castro “could not stand the guardian’s home any longer, and became a boarder at Dolores.” From then on, he was master of himself and worked his “own problems without advice from anyone.”²⁶

According to Szulc, Fidel’s view of his parents was principally one of contempt, yet, he used them “to his advantage, accepting financial aid from them” for over 30 years, up to 1956!

Scholastically, Fidel was not a good student, although he did, and does, seem to have a powerful memory. “He got good grades for his fantastic memory.”²⁷ He graduated from Dolores when he was 15 and went to Havana to continue his education with the Jesuits, at one of the best schools, the Colegio de Belen, where the rich and the conservative Havana elites sent their sons.

Unlike Marti, Castro was affluent. Fidel himself declared that he entered Belen “with a lot of money to buy clothes and other articles...and to pay tuition, purchase books...and for other expenses.”²⁸

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were affluent and dressed much better than he ever did. In fact, as already indicated, Marti's parents could not afford to finance his higher education.

Also unlike Marti, Fidel was a great athlete. At the age of 18, during his third year at Belen, he was declared Cuba's "outstanding collegiate athlete." He was good at almost any sport: basketball, baseball, track, swimming. Apparently, he was not interested, or good enough to make any of the Cuban Olympic teams of the times, such as the central American games in Barranquilla, Colombia (1946), or the Olympic games in London, England (1948).

In the classroom, Fidel would excel only in subjects of his interest, such as Spanish, geography, and history, particularly sacred history, as taught at a Jesuit school.

Even though he claimed to have enjoyed the accounts of the Old and New Testaments, with their reference to Samson, Moses, Jericho, Babylon, and, finally, the Crucifixion of Christ, Fidel would refer to such religious education as obscurantism, superstition, and lies later on when, in 1961, he declared himself to be a Marxist-Leninist.²⁹

Castro finished at Belen by 1945, somehow missing World War II, but has little to offer as significant from his educational experience in terms of his political and revolutionary activities. If anything, Castro was exposed to the fascist, ultrarightist philosophies of the Jesuits of Cuba, who sympathized with Spain's Franco.

Fidel has indicated that he had followed, "observed" is the word used by Szulc, "the rightist philosophy of his professors," and that it was in sports where he "tried to advance his studies."³⁰

What can be said, then, about Castro's educational background? He himself admitted that he was no intellectual, but "a man of revolutionary action."³¹

No one would argue with that! But, precisely, since Castro was no intellectual, how could he seriously claim to be the intellectual heir to Jose Marti who, if anything, was all intellect, thought, ideology? In fact, when Jose Marti tried to be "a man of action," he was killed immediately!

Marti was killed during his first encounter with the Spanish forces, while conspicuously riding a white horse, just "weeks after coming home to Cuba from exile. He was only forty-two, a slim, sad-faced man with a bushy, pointed moustache and a half goatee...and almost constantly in poor health."³²

Prison Experience

If anything is definitely different between Marti and Castro, it is their respective prison experience.

Marti was barely 16 years old when he was sentenced to six years of hard labor in a stone quarry in Havana, Las Canteras de San Lazaro. "He was chained from waist to ankle, and suffered severe hardships which had a lasting effect on his spiritual and physical being."³³

Thanks to his father's indefatigable support, Marti was freed after serving one year. He was exiled to Spain and, out of the experience, the world learned about the horrible conditions of political prisoners in Cuba under Spanish rule through Marti's famous work, *El Presidio Político en Cuba* (*The Political Garrison in Cuba*). At 17, Marti had "established himself as a political writer with a cause."³⁴

One may compare Marti's life in prison to that of Fidel's. At the age of 27, Fidel was sentenced to 20 years in prison for his 1953 attack on the Moncada Army Barracks at Santiago, in Oriente Province. The attack failed and most participants were killed, many of them tortured after they had surrendered.

It is not clear how Fidel got out alive. According to Szulc, Castro told him that his car had been stolen in the middle of the attack and had no choice but to leave, after furiously attempting but failing to regroup his troops. Szulc's account depicts a heroic Fidel vainly fighting insurmountable forces.

Later on, Archbishop Perez Serantes interceded with Batista's government on behalf of Fidel and obtained a promise to protect Castro's life. The priest went up the mountain calling and looking for Fidel, but by then Castro had been captured and, as Szulc put it, he made sure that no impression of surrendering was given by rejecting the archbishop's cries of guarantees and protection.

Fidel Castro's prison experience can best be summarized from a letter he wrote from jail in 1955: "Can you imagine the loneliness of this cell? Fortunately, I know how to cook and, once in a while, I devote my time and energy to preparing succulent dishes. A few days ago my brother sent me a whole ham...and I prepared a steak with guava jam....I also make spaghetti...or cheese omelets....Dr. M.C. sent me a box of H. Upmann cigars...when I take some sun in the morning with my shorts on and I feel

the fresh sea breeze, it seems to me that I'm at the beach...they are making me think that I'm on a vacation here."³⁵

Obviously, Fidel Castro never suffered the physical injuries nor the mental anguish experienced by Jose Marti. Castro's jail experience was more like an adventure, if not, as he put it, an outright vacation! He was amnestied by Batista less than two years later.

Ideologically as Different as Day and Night

Marti's political ideology is inseparable from his philosophy of life. Both are universal. They also are the product of a prodigious, bright, concerned mind.

Marti's work is too vast even to attempt to summarize it. One of his biographers, Dr. Gray, lists 36 "general references," 28 "anthologies and collected works of Jose Marti," 19 biographies, 63 "monographs on Jose Marti," 205 articles and periodicals, six government publications, five "unpublished material," and an assorted number of "other sources."³⁶

It would be futile to synthesize Marti's political thought here. Nevertheless, enough can be said to establish basic differences between the real liberator of Cuba and his pretentious and alleged ideological heir, Fidel Castro.

In essence, Marti's political specific objectives were "to secure the complete liberation of Cuba and Puerto Rico from Spain, prevent their annexation by the United States, and establish democratic and free republics."³⁷

None of these goals were achieved during Marti's life. The liberation from Spain took place three years after his death in 1895, while the threat of annexation of the two islands did not cease to exist until the 1930's. The question of a free republic, particularly in relation to Cuba, still remains unanswered.

Nonetheless, Marti's writings made it clear that the final outcome of a free Cuba had to be one in which the Cuban Revolutionary Party, the party he founded, did not "have as its object to bring to Cuba a victorious group that would consider the island as its prize and dominion."³⁸ This becomes more significant today in view of the total domination of the island by Fidel Castro and his Communist Party.

More to the point. Marti had clearly indicated that "a people is made up of the rights and opinions of all its members, and not of the rights and

opinions of a single class . . . nor is it the will of a single man, however pure it might be.³⁹

Marti's position vis-a-vis the United States and Spain was merely an extension of his overall political philosophy, which calls for a free Cuba: free from the United States, free from Spain, and free from anyone else, including, of course, the Soviet Union. Fidel Castro's political views and behavior, on the contrary, have totally subordinated the people of Cuba to the ultimate power of the Soviet Union.

Perhaps fearing a misunderstanding of his political ideas, Marti clearly indicated his repudiation of a socialist system for Cuba. Marquez Sterling cites Marti's words to the effect that "the man who now wants to be taken care of by the state, will have to work on everything that the state orders him to do. From servant of himself, he will become a slave of the state."⁴⁰

Under Castro's Cuba today, that is precisely what the Cuban man has become: a slave of the Cuban communist state. Nothing could be further from Jose Marti's vision of a free Cuba.

As Marquez Sterling reminds us, Marti was committed to the equality of men by constitutional means on the basis of the separation of powers and, fundamentally, based on the right of universal suffrage and respect for individual rights, including, of course, the right to private property. Marti also rejected the concentration of capital in the hands of businesses whose interests were foreign to Cuba's national interest.⁴¹

The markedly different political views of Jose Marti, when compared with those of Fidel Castro, are also clearly indicated by Hugh Thomas, who ascertained that "there was no thought of socialism" in Marti's vision of a free Cuba. He also asserted that Marti "seems to have believed that the cultivation of land was the only really honest activity," and that Marti's writings were more in line

with Rousseau than with Marx.⁴²

It is true that Marti wanted a Cuba free of the United States, as well as

of Spain. However, his anti-United States views in this context could not be equated with those of Castro's, who simply uses the United States as a scapegoat for his socioeconomic and political failures.

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Cuba, under Fidel Castro, is free from the United States, but the Soviet Union plays as great a part in Cuban politics as did the US. Russia is Cuba's main market for her main product. She supplies Cuba with weapons, with the intelligence and espionage technology required. She is her only supplier of both wheat and oil.⁴³ However, one is reminded of Marti's admonition: "*Cambiar de amo no significa ser libre*" ("To change masters does not mean that one is free").

There is no doubt that Jose Marti had a broad, universal, humanist political philosophy whose rock bottom foundation was the freedom of the individual to act and to participate in society for his personal and its collective benefit. The strand that runs through Marti's philosophy, since he was a child until his untimely death, is simply: freedom.

Fidel Castro's political thinking, if any, cannot be compared to Jose Marti's. In fact, there is no political thought worth comparing. As Hugh Thomas put it, Fidel Castro lacks "any firmly organized body of principles."⁴⁴ As soon as Castro had proclaimed (January 1959) that neither he nor his political movement was communist, and that he would never use force to further his revolution (February 1959), he acknowledged (December 1961) that he had been and would continue to be a Marxist-Leninist "for the rest of his life."⁴⁵

The imposition of communism on the Cuban people, of course, has occurred and continues to occur with the help of the most coercive means of the state *apparatus* at Castro's disposal, force constituting the principal means.

Ironically, "Castro must be the first Marxist-Leninist leader who had scarcely read much of the works of the master and who scarcely allows more than a few words and few expressions taken from Marxism to enter his vocabulary."⁴⁶

Actually, Tad Szulc emphasizes the “remarkable consistency” of Fidel Castro’s political thinking, which is identified by Szulc as being Marxist-Leninist as far back as Castro’s university years. To demonstrate this consistency, Szulc points out that Castro “proceeded to bring to power the Communists who were his university friends but had never participated in any of his revolutionary actions.”⁴⁷

Whether Castro was or was not a communist is irrelevant here. In this context, however, Castro’s “political thought” would be totally contrary to Jose Marti’s. If Castro was not a communist, then he, unlike Jose Marti, had no ideological principle, as Hugh Thomas had said. If Castro was all along a marxist, as Szulc indicates, then Fidel’s political ideological content could never be equated to that of Jose Marti, who had rejected such an ideology.

Fidel Castro’s political development began when he joined UIR (*Union Insurreccional Revolucionaria*), one of the so-called action groups whose main characteristic was the professional violence with which they imposed their political views within and without the University of Havana. Fidel was only 19 years old.

The UIR and similar groups were made of “people foreign to the student body with a very low standard of education and from the fringes of society, who were either habitually unemployed or had never given any serious thought to working.”⁴⁸

The UIR was also known for its rabid anticommunism. “It was they who physically expelled the Communists from the student organizations and loaned their armed men” to the government’s political party (*Autentico*) in order to expel the people’s Socialist Party (Communist) from Cuba’s largest and traditionally communist controlled trade union, the “Cuban Workers’ Confederation.”⁴⁹

Ironically, the UIR anticommunist orientation stemmed, in part, from the communist cooperation with, and support of, the government of dictator Batista in the early 1940’s.

It is interesting to note that Szulc believes Castro’s communist inclination dates back to Fidel’s university days. As previously mentioned, Szulc indicated as a sign of Fidel’s ideological consistency that Castro brought to power the communists who were his university friends.⁵⁰

However, it would be difficult to reconcile a Fidel, member of the anticommunist UIR, with a Fidel who had communist friends at the

university. As Suarez describes him, 19-year-old Castro was more a man of action, “of an unarchic, semiliterate, and violent character, while the Communists paid tribute to discipline, were arrogantly doctrinaire, and generally displayed exemplary submissiveness.”⁵¹

Furthermore, the fact is that such action-groups as the UIR lacked ideology, program, or doctrine. Action-groups devote their energy to procure weapons with which to fight rival gangs and gain political power. Fidel Castro’s political indoctrination owes a lot to the violent nature of a life devoid of any ideological content.

Due to his prodigious memory, Fidel Castro was able, during his Moncada attack trial, to quote and recite names and ideas of all kinds of political and philosophic figures, from ancient China and India to John Locke and more contemporary defenders of the right to rebel. Yet, Castro has seldom, if ever, made reference again to any or all of these philosophers or political luminaries as representatives or founders of his political inclinations. This is why, as Suarez put it, Fidel Castro has been at times a “Democrat,” a “Humanist,” a “Socialist,” and, as of late, a “Marxist-Leninist.”⁵²

Castro’s lack of ideology is reflected in the lack of political orientation of his own *26 of July* political movement. Neither the program he formulated in 1952 in Mexico, in which he claimed that the movement was led by the principles of democracy, nationalism, and social justice, nor his *History Will Absolve Me* pamphlet utilized in his Moncada defense, has ever been declared to be the ideological program of Fidel Castro’s movement.

As Suarez saw it, “a typically Fidelista confusion dominated the movement in the ideological field.”⁵³

Conclusion

In brief, Fidel Castro has never had any basic ideology or political philosophy on which to sustain his revolution, much less his claim to be Jose Marti’s political heir. As Hugh Thomas put it in 1971, Castro’s government has remained the dictatorship it has been since 1959, which has been defined as “a group of armed men, moved by a common faith, seize power, and decree that they are the state.” Thirty years later, Castro’s regime remains as the example *par excellence* of such a dictatorship.⁵⁴

For anyone to believe or to claim that that is what Jose Marti envisioned for a free Cuba is to show an abysmal ignorance about the greatness and goodness of Marti or, worse, it is to insult the sensibility and intelligence

of those, Cubans and non-Cubans alike, who know about Jose Marti and about Marti's love for Cuba.

Notes

- ¹ Tad Szulc, *Fidel*, New York: Morrow, 1986, p.91.
- ² *Ibid.*, p.93.
- ³ Theodore Draper, *Castroism*, New York: Praeger, 1965, p.113.
- ⁴ Szuic, *op. cit.*, p.97.
- ⁵ Hugh Thomas, *Cuba*, New York: Harper and Row, 1971, p.805.
- ⁶ Szuic, *op. cit.*, p.102.
- ⁷ Thomas, *op. cit.*, p.807.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p.805.
- ⁹ Richard Gray, *Jose Marti*, Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1962, p.228.
- ¹⁰ Szuic, *op. cit.*, p.103.
- ¹¹ Carlos Marquez Sterling, *Jose Marti*, Mexico City: Editorial Porrua, 1982, p.3.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p.6.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p.10.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.3.
- ¹⁵ Thomas, *op. cit.*, p.295.
- ¹⁶ Sterling, *op. cit.*, p.16.
- ¹⁷ Szuic, *op. cit.*, p.108.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.109.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.111.
- ²¹ Thomas, *op. cit.*, p.808.
- ²² Szuic, *op. cit.*, p.113.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p.110. La Salle was run by the Brothers of the Christians Schools.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.112.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.114.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.118.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.119.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.124.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.128.

- ³¹ Andres Suarez, *Cuba*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1967, p.16.
- ³² Szuic, *op. cit.*, p.91.
- ³³ Gray, *op. cit.*, p.5.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.6.
- ³⁵ Alberto Montaner, *Secret Report on the Cuban Revolution*, New Brunswick: New Jersey: Translation Books, 1981, p.69.
- ³⁶ Gray, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-298.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.60.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.62
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.63.
- ⁴⁰ Sterling, *op. cit.*, p.135.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.159.
- ⁴² Thomas, *op. cit.*, p.317.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.1475.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.1489.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, note 15.
- ⁴⁷ Szuic, *op. cit.*, p.259.
- ⁴⁸ Suarez, *op. cit.*, p.14.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.15.
- ⁵⁰ Szulc, *Loc. cit.*
- ⁵¹ Suarez, *Loc. cit.*
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, p.18.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.32.
- ⁵⁴ Thomas, *op. cit.*, p.1486.