

Monster (Fidel Castro)



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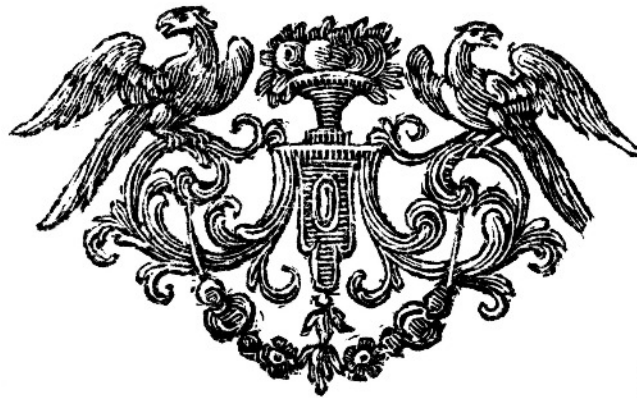
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Fidel Castro entered Havana on January 8, 1959, to wild acclaim from all quarters. Most Cubans were jubilant; Castro was promising an end to the corrupt governments that had plagued Cuba since independence. Far from any Communism, Castro was promising a revolution "as green as Cuba's palm trees!" with national elections in three months. Private property would be secure, a free press guaranteed, friendly relations with the U.S. were essential.

"*Fidel esta es tu casa!*" read impromptu signs that were springing up across the front of thousands of Cuban homes, including mansions, humble country shacks and everything in between.

The New York Times had been singing Castro's praises since the first interview with him as a rebel in February 1957. By now most of the international press had joined the cheerleading. Jack Paar never treated a guest on his Tonight Show as deferentially as he treated honored guest Fidel Castro. Ed Sullivan hailed Castro as "Cuba's George Washington." Retired president Harry Truman called Castro a "good young man trying to do what's best for Cuba. We should extend him a hand." The U.S. actually accorded diplomatic recognition to Castro's government more quickly than it had recognized Batista's in 1952. In fact, the promptness of this U.S. recognition set a record for recognition of a Latin American government. Usually the process took weeks; for Castro, it took mere days.

Yet within three months of his entry into Havana, Castro's firing squads had murdered an estimated 600-1,100 men and boys, and Cuba's jails held ten times the number of political prisoners as under Fulgencio Batista, who Castro overthrew with claims to "liberating" Cuba. Barely a year in power, Castro was referring to the U.S. as "a vulture preying on humanity!" And most of Cuba's newspapers and TV stations (Cuba had more TVs per capita at the time than Germany, Canada or France) were under government control, to better serve "the people." Six months later he confiscated all U.S. properties on the Island, 5,911 businesses worth \$2 billion worth, along with most property and businesses owned by Cubans.

On January 3, 1961, outgoing President Eisenhower finally declared, "there's a limit to what the United States in self-respect can endure. That limit has been reached." He broke diplomatic relations with Cuba. During the Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961, Castro finally declared his revolution "Socialist," and in December of that year he declared himself "a lifelong Marxist-Leninist!" Cuba was now officially Communist.

They say you can boil a live frog in a pot by gradually turning up the heat. He will not jump out, because he can't tell the temperature's changing. Something like this happened to Cuba. Castro's Revolution was a stealth revolution, done in stages, dividing and conquering till he had the whole prize. "*First they came for the Batistianos and I didn't protest because I had no connections with Batista's government. Then they came for the big landowners and I didn't protest because I didn't have a Sugar mill; I had a small tobacco farm. Then they came for the big businessmen and I didn't protest because I was a small shopkeeper not a factory owner. Finally they came for me...*" and, well, we've heard this song before.

Large landholdings were initially "nationalized" on the pretext of "land reform" where the massive *latifundia* would be parceled out to landless peasants. A *New York Times* editorial hailed the confiscations: "This promise of social justice brought a foretaste of human dignity for millions who had little knowledge of it in Cuba's former near-feudal economy."

As with so much else regarding pre-Castro Cuba, major misconceptions abound in this editorial. To wit: in the 1950's the average farm-wage in "near-feudal" Cuba was higher than in France, Belgium, Denmark, or West Germany. According to the Geneva-based International Labor Organization, the average daily wage for an agricultural worker in Cuba in 1958 was \$3. The average daily wage in France at the time was \$2.73; in Belgium \$2.70; in Denmark \$2.74; in West Germany \$2.73; and in the U.S. \$4.06. Also, far from huge *latifundia* dominating the agricultural landscape, the average Cuban farm in 1958 was actually smaller than the average farm in the U.S.: 140 acres in Cuba vs. 195 acres in the U.S. In 1958 Cuba, a nation of 6.2 million people, had 159,958 farms -- 11,000 of which were tobacco farms. Only 34 percent of the Cuban population was rural.

Confiscated farms remained in Cuban government hands as state farms on the Soviet model. By early 1959, Soviet advisers from the Ukraine were already directing Castro's Institute of Agrarian Reform. As the pattern became clear a major rebellion broke out in the Cuban countryside. According to Raul Castro (Castro's brother and the head of Cuba's military), the rebellion involved 179 different "counterrevolutionary bands." This guerrilla war lasted from 1960 to 1966. It took the Castroites 6 years, tens of thousands of troops, scores of Russian advisors, squadrons of Soviet tanks, helicopters, flame throwers, and a massive and brutal "re-location" campaign where thousands of rural families were uprooted at gunpoint and relocated to concentration camps the very western tip of Cuba, to finally crush the rebellion.

"Cuban military units commanded by Russian officers employed flame-throwers to burn hundreds of rural palm-thatched cottages," reads one account of the rebellion. "We fought with the fury of cornered beasts," recalls one veteran from Miami today. And alone, one might add. The Kennedy-Khrushchev pact that ended the Cuban Missile Crisis completely starved the rebels of even the meagre supplies they'd received by airdrop in 1961.

Two years into his revolution Castro managed to turn Cuba's traditional immigration pattern on it's head. Prior to 1959 Cuba experienced net immigration. In fact--as a percentage of population-- Cuba took in more immigrants in the 20th century than the U.S. took in--and this includes the Ellis Island years. In 1958 the Cuban embassy in Rome had a backlog of 12,000 applications for immigrant visas from Italians clamoring to immigrate to Cuba. From 1903-1950 Cuba took in over one million Spanish immigrants. (notice: pre-Castro Cuba's wetbacks came from the first -world.) Also, before Castro, more Americans lived in Cuba than Cubans in the U.S. Back then people were as desperate to enter Cuba as they are now to escape. Come Castro and half-starved Haitians (a short 60 miles away) turn up their nose at Cuba.

By 1992 two million Cubans had fled Cuba, most against staggering odds and with only the clothes on their back. By most estimates this is a tiny fraction of those who desired to leave. A causeway from Havana to Key West in 1961 with the same free travel as existed in Cuba (indeed, in all civilized countries) in 1958 would have emptied the island in two months. According to Cuban-American scholar Dr Armando Lago, 83,000 Cubans have died at sea while attempting to leave Cuba.

Also revealing of the misery and desperation created by the Castro regime is Cuba's suicide rate, which reached 24 per thousand in 1986- making it double Latin America's average, making it triple Cuba's pre-Castro rate, making Cuban women the most suicidal in the world, and making death by suicide the primary cause of death for Cubans aged 15-48. At that point the Cuban government ceased publishing the statistics on the self-slaughter. The figures became state secrets. The implications seem to horrify even the government.

In 1958 Cuba had a higher standard of living than any Latin American country and half of Europe. I'll quote a UNESCO report from 1957: "One feature of the Cuban social structure is a large middle class. Cuban workers are more unionized (proportional to the population) than U.S.

workers... the average wage for an 8 hour day in Cuba 1957 is higher than for workers in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany. Cuban labor receives 66.6 per cent of gross national income. In the U.S. the figure is 68 per cent. 44 per cent of Cubans were covered by Social legislation, that's a higher percentage then in the U.S. at the time."

In 1958 Cubans had the 3rd highest protein consumption in the hemisphere. But in 1962 Castro's government introduced ration cards that persist to this day. While comparing a Cubans' daily rations as mandated by Castro's government to the daily rations of Cubans slaves as mandated by the Spanish King in 1842, an intrepid Cuban exile uncovered this fascinating info:

Food Ration in 1842 for slaves in Cuba: Castro Gov. Ration since 1962

meat, chicken, fish--8 oz 2 oz.

Rice-- 4 oz. 3 oz

Starches-- 16 oz. 6.5 oz

Beans 4 oz. 1 oz.

The half-starved slaves on the ship *Amistad* ate better than Elian Gonzalez does now. Yet Eleanor Cliff told us on in her column and again on the McLaughlin Group that: "To be a poor child in Cuba may be better than being a poor child in the U.S."

The Soviets ended up pumping some \$130 billion into Cuba. That's ten Marshall plans, and pumped-- not into a war-ravaged continent of 300 million-- but into an island of 7-9 million. Yet the ration cards persist to this day.

Promptly upon entering Havana on January 8, 1959 Fidel Castro abolished Habeas Corpus and appointed Che Guevara his main executioner. "To send men to the firing squad, judicial proof is unnecessary," The Argentine Ernesto "Che" Guevara declared. "These procedures are an archaic bourgeois detail. This is a revolution! And a revolutionary must become a cold killing machine motivated by pure hate. We must create the pedagogy of the paredon (the execution wall)"

Given the rate of firing squad executions in Cuba in the early 60's, thousands of gallons of perfectly good, perfectly valuable blood gushed from the bodies of young men only to soak uselessly into the mud, wash into gutters or get sopped up by buckets of sawdust. By 1961 Cuba's government was already desperately short on foreign exchange. In two short years Castro had rendered a nation with a living standard higher than half of Europe and with a peso always on par with the U.S. dollar, utterly destitute, utterly bereft of foreign exchange. The massive Soviet subsidies could never compensate for the destruction of Cuba's vibrant pre-Castro economy.

In 1961 an ocean of fresh, plasma-rich Cuban blood was being freed from its confines by bullets and spilling in torrents daily. The Castroites hit upon the scheme of collecting it and selling it. Dozens of those murdered after sham trials were U.S. citizens. Here's official court records – from the suit that Howard Anderson's family filed against Castro's regime.

Anderson vs Republic of Cuba, No. 01-28628 (Miami-Dade Cir. April 13, 2003): "In one final session of torture, Castro's agents drained Howard Anderson's body of blood before sending him to his death at the firing squad."

Eighteen thousand bodies would eventually join Howard Anderson's in mass graves. This tally comes-- not from some Cuban-exile scandal sheet in Miami,--but from *The Black Book of Communism*, written by French scholars and translated into English by Harvard University press, not exactly an outpost of the vast right-wing conspiracy. But this cold statistic doesn't tell the whole story.

Carlos Machado was 15 years old in 1963 when the bullets shattered his bound body. His twin brother and father collapsed beside Carlos from the same volley. All had resisted Castro's theft of their humble family farm.

On Christmas eve 1961 Juana Diaz spat in the face of the Castroite executioners who were binding and gagging her. They'd found her guilty of feeding and hiding "counterrevolutionaries" When the blast from that firing squad demolished her face and torso Juana was six months pregnant.

Traditionally, firing squads have only or two of its members with loaded guns. The rest shoot blanks. Not Castro's. In his, all ten members shoot live ammo--all ten bullets rip into the staked hero or heroine. This incorporates more members into Castro's criminal organization, more members to resist desperately any overthrow of the system with the consequent settling of accounts.

Cuba's population in 1960 was 6.2 million. According to the human Rights group Freedom House, 500,000 Cubans (young and old, male and female) have passed through Castro's prison camps. At one time during 1961-62, 300,000 Cubans were jailed for political offences island wide. This makes Castro's political incarceration rate higher than Stalin and Hitler's.

Also, the longest serving political prisoners of the century spent their hell in Castro's Gulag. Senores Mario Chanes de Armas, Angel de Fana and Eusebio Penalver all served thirty years in Castro's dungeons. Consider that Alexander Solzhenitsyn served 8 years in Stalin's Gulag as did Natan Scharansky. Many Cubans served over three times as long.

"For months I was naked in a 6 x 4 foot cell," recalls one prisoner, Eusebio Penalver (the longest serving black political prisoner of the Century, by the way--jailed longer than Nelson Mandela.) "That's 4 feet high, so you couldn't stand. But I felt a great freedom inside myself. I refused to commit spiritual suicide."

Credit for finally exposing the horrors of Castro's Gulag to a mass international audience must go to former political prisoner Armando Valladares and especially to his prison memoirs titled *Against All Hope* released in 1984. Castro's extensive and murderous Gulag had been in operation for over two decades by then and had been exposed and denounced by many, as had Stalin's (Malcolm Muggeridge, Eugene Lyons, Arthur Koestler, etc.) in the 30's and 40's.

But just as it took the novelist Alexander Solzhenitzyn to finally shake the world awake about the Gulag thirty years after its murderous height, it took the poet Armando Valladares to expose Castroism to the mainstream, however late in the game. In 1960 Valladares had been arrested in his office for the crime of refusing to display a pro-Castro sign on his desk. He was summarily sentenced to 30 years of prison for the offence.

In prison, Valladares, like Eusebio Penalver, Chanes De Armas, Ernesto Diaz Rodriguez, Huber Matos and so many others refused "to commit spiritual suicide." Which is to say, they rejected any "rehabilitation," or "re-education" by their jailers. They balked at any "confession" of their political sins. They knew all this applied only to their jailers. For this Armando Valladares paid dearly. To this day he remains crippled from the beatings and starving he endured in Castro's Gulag.

Valladares managed to get his writings smuggled out of prison and into Europe. In December 1977, forty-seven US Senators signed an appeal for his release, and Amnesty International took up his cause. In 1979 a book of Valladares's poems titled, *Prisonnier de Castro* appeared in Paris, translated by Pierre Golendorf, a former member of the French Communist Party. The book was dedicated to Valladares' fellow prisoners and described their plight in harrowing detail, including

the plight of women prisoners, "Berta, Ann Lazara, Maria Amalia, Esther, Miriam...roses amidst barbed wire, beaten mercilessly by the guards."

International pressure including personal appeals to Castro by his friend Francois Mitterand finally won Valladares' release in 1982. In 1984 he released his prison memoirs titled *Against all Hope*, and in 1986, immediately after having read them, Ronald Reagan appointed Valladares U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Human Rights Commission. Here Valladares had his work cut out for him.

"Unbelievably, there has been a continuing love affair on the part of the media and many intellectuals with Fidel Castro." He recalls. "While I was on book tours in the mid-1980s I encountered many individuals who argued fiercely on behalf of the Castro regime. The thousands of accusations of violations of human rights in Cuba conflicted with the double standard then current at the U.N. The posture of many countries was governed by their hostility against the United States, and they excused Castro out of a reflexive anti-Americanism."

By 1965 counterrevolutionary activity was winding down in Cuba. The Kennedy-Khrushchev deal with its subsequent round up and jailing of anti-Castro fighters in the U.S. (men who'd been trained by the CIA for the very purpose a month before) pulled the plug on much of the anti-Castro resistance. Now the Castro regime, needing new pretext for mass-jailings and the cowering of the population, turned its police loose on "anti-social elements," on "deviants" and on "delinquents." Youths were the target here, with special emphasis on long-hairs, rock & roll listeners and--especially-- homosexuals.

In fact any youth who didn't display a gung-ho "revolutionary" attitude was fair game. Jehovah's Witnesses, active Catholics and Protestants along with children of political prisoners were swept up in the dragnet.. "My charge read: 'active in Catholic Associations'" recalls Emilio Izquierdo, rounded up at the age of 17 in 1965, and today President in Miami of the UMAP Political Prisoners Association.

A special set of forced labour camps named UMAP were set up for these young prisoners. The initials stood for *Unidades Militares del Ayuda de Produccion*" (Military Units to Help Production). The official title did little to hide the pretext for the camps--forced labor. These camps were completely enclosed by high barbed wire, had machine guns in each watchtower and ferocious dogs keeping watch below. The one enclosing the homosexuals had a sign "Work Will Make Men Out of You" above the entrance gate, eerily reminiscent of Auschwitz' "Work Will Set You Free."

"There seems to be an unusually strong emotional aversion to homosexuals in Cuba which Castro shares," wrote Herbert Matthews of the New York Times, Castro's original and foremost champion in the U.S. media. Not even he could deny it. Yet prior to Castro, homosexuals in Cuba lived perfectly normal lives. In fact the Cuban people had elected one President in 1945, Ramon Grau San Martin. Actually, Castroite persecution of Cuba's homosexuals began two years before UMAP in 1963 with a government campaign called "Operation P" for (prostitutes, pimps and pederasts.) In this campaign homosexuals were identified, rounded up and thrown in prison where their uniforms sported a big P. In the early and mid 60's in Cuba, outing a homosexual to the police became a common practice for those seeking special favours or to ingratiate themselves with the authorities.

The UMAP camps featured brutal labour in the tropical sun, and summary beatings and executions for any laggards. Word about this savagery soon got out amongst the general population and discontent was rife. After all, none of these prisoners had been convicted, even in the sham Castroite courts, of any counterrevolutionary crimes. Military and police trucks would simply

surround an area of Havana known as, say, a homosexual hang-out, and every person in sight would be herded into the military trucks at gunpoint.

In 1968, according to official government notice, UMAP was disbanded. Their reputation had become too notorious. Technically the notice of this disbanding was accurate. After 1968 those "deviants" and other "anti-social elements" started being herded into "Battalions of Decisive Effort" the "Young People's Column of the Centennial" and the "Young People's Work Army." Different names, same forced labour camps.

In a film titled "Cursed Be Your Name, Liberty," Cuban exile Vladimir Ceballos documents how in the mid 80's over one hundred Cuban youths deliberately injected themselves with the aids virus. At the time Castro's Cuba had developed a very efficient method of dealing with the malady. The patients were banished to "sanatoriums" in the middle of the countryside and basically left alone till they died. "Left alone" is the key phrase here.

Apparently to some tortured souls banishment in those AIDS sanatoriums smacked of freedom, as compared to life on the outside. Dr. Jorge Pérez, an exiled Cuban physician and AIDS specialist, now living in Spain reports that in the mid 80's the Cuban government ran ads on national TV showing that these AIDS sanatoria featured air-conditioning, color TV, swimming pools, and three meals of excellent food daily. Cuba's population, of course, savour these things only in their dreams.

The ad was actually an attempt to snare volunteers for government experiments with AIDS vaccines. Any successful vaccines discovered as a result would translate into a deluge of foreign currency for Castro. As expected, the response to the ads was overwhelming, and the volunteers were interned in a sanatorium near Santiago de las Vegas in Havana province where they were inoculated with the AIDS virus. Dr. Pérez reports that the strain used was particularly strong and ninety percent of the volunteers died the typically agonizing and prolonged AIDS death within two years.

JFK's "dreary account of mismanagement, timidity and indecision" as Eisenhower described his handling of the Bay of Pigs invasion emboldened the Soviets to install Nuclear missiles in Cuba the following year. Khrushchev documents in his memoirs how Castro pleaded with him to launch a pre-emptive nuclear attack on the U.S. in October of 1962. The telegram making the plea sits in the Kennedy Library today. Some think Khrushchev's fear of Castro's officers somehow getting hold of the Nuclear buttons was a bigger factor in his decision to remove the Missiles than the "blockade" (in fact, 55 ships breached it) imposed by the Kennedy administration around Cuba at the time.

The prudence of Khrushchev's decision was revealed the following month by Castro's second-in-command, Che Guevara. "If the missiles had remained," he told The London Daily Worker in November 1962 "We would have used them against the very heart of the U.S., including New York. We must never establish peaceful co-existence. In this struggle to the death between 2 systems we must gain the ultimate victory. We must walk the path of liberation even if it costs millions of atomic victims."

He didn't get his hands on the missiles but Castro emerged the big winner of the Missile Crisis. "Many concessions were made by the Americans about which not a word has been said...perhaps one day they'll be made public," said Fidel Castro in a speech in 1966.

"We can't say anything public about this agreement. It would be too much of a political embarrassment for us." That's Robert F Kennedy to Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin in October of 1962.

In his memoirs Nikita Khrushchev himself clarified the matter: "It would have been ridiculous for us to go to war over Cuba--for a country 12,000 miles away. For us, war was unthinkable. We ended up getting exactly what we'd wanted all along, security for Fidel Castro's regime and American missiles removed from Turkey. Until today the U.S. has complied with her promise not to interfere with Castro and not to allow anyone else to interfere with Castro. After Kennedy's death, his successor Lyndon Johnson assured us that he would keep the promise not to invade Cuba."

With these factors in mind, the Castro regime's longevity (so puzzling to many) becomes much easier to understand.

The Cuban Revolution started devouring its own children very early. Revolutionary Cuba's first figurehead president, Manuel Urrutia, fled into exile for his very life exactly 6 months after his appointment by Castro, who shortly went on TV to brand Urrutia a "traitor" and threatened him with the *paredon!* President Urrutia's offense had been some mild criticism of Communism. The badly rattled Urrutia watched Castro's TV tirade from his very Presidential office that night in July of 1959 while convulsed in sobs. Within minutes he noticed mobs forming in front of his office shrieking. "*paredon!- paredon!*" Quickly gathering his wits he scrambled out the back door of the building and later that night slunk into the Venezuelan embassy disguised as a milkman.

Commander Huber Matos was credited by Castro himself with "saving the revolution" when he flew a planeload of arms into the Sierra Maestra from Costa Rica in March of 1958. The arms were donated by leftist Costa Rican President Jose "Pepe" Figueres and may have originated with the CIA, who in keeping with its support of the "Democratic Left" at the time, was very friendly with both Figueres and Castro's July 26th Movement. "Me and my staff were all Fidelistas!" proclaimed Robert Reynolds, the CIA's Caribbean desk chief from 1957-60. Reynolds made his pronouncement during a friendly chat with Fidel Castro himself at a "Bay of Pigs, 40 Years After" Conference held in Havana, April 2001.

After arriving with the arms, Matos, a July 26th underground operative till then, was quickly named a "*comandante*" in the Rebel army as well. In December of that year he led a rebel column into the city of Santiago then entered Havana on January 8th atop the same Sherman tank with Fidel Castro.

Upon the Revolutionary triumph, Castro appointed Matos military commander of Camaguey province where Matos signed off on the prompt firing-squad executions of over 60 Batista soldiers, including a wounded one who was carried to the stake on a stretcher. Nine months later Matos was facing a firing squad himself, accused by Castro of "treason."

"Fidel, you are destroying your own work." Matos, alarmed at what he saw as the Communist usurpation of the Revolution, had written to Castro. "You are burying the revolution. Perhaps there is still time. I plead with you, comrade. Help us save the revolution ...Fidel, we fought in the name of Truth, for all the sound principles that bind civilization and mankind together. Please, in the names of our fallen comrades, Fidel, do not bury the revolution."

That letter sealed Matos' doom. Raul Castro and Che Guevara wanted him immediately lined up at the *paredon* and executed. Castro thought it over and countered that he didn't want to make Matos "a martyr." With Matos trial most of the "moderates" (democratic socialists) still in Castro's government had to finally face the music. Most resigned, went underground then into exile --- in that order.

Matos ended up suffering 20 years in Castro's dungeons. He refused any and all "rehabilitation" by his jailers and suffered horribly for it. He was finally released in 1979 and lives in Miami today where he heads the political group *Cuba Democratica y Independente* (CID).

Among other Revolutionary "Comandantes" who fought alongside Castro against Batista, served early in his regime, but weren't quite as fortunate as Matos were Humberto Sori Marin and William "El Americano" Morgan. Both fell out with La Revolucion over Communism. And the way Castro saw it, they were the traitors, not him.

Humberto Sori Marin was arrested in April of 1961 as a counterrevolutionary and his brother Mariano went to visit Castro, pleading clemency for his brother. If for no other reason, than for "for old times sake," pleaded Mariano, recalling when Fidel and Humberto had been Revolutionary comrades.

"Don't worry, Mariano," a smiling Castro said while slapping him affectionately on the back. "In the Sierra I learned to love your brother. Yes, he's in our custody, but completely safe from harm. Absolutely nothing will happen to him. Please give your mom and dad a big hug and big kiss from me and tell them to please calm down."

The next day Mariano collapsed at the sight of his brother, Humberto's, mangled corpse in a mass grave. Castro's firing squad had pumped over 20 shots into his brother's body that very dawn. Humberto Sori Marin's head was almost completely obliterated, his face unrecognisable.

"Kneel and beg for your life!" Castro's executioners taunted the bound and helpless William Morgan as he glowered at Castro's firing squad in April 1961.

"I kneel for no man!" former Rebel Comandante Morgan snarled back, according to eye witness John Martino in his book, *I Was Castro's Prisoner*.

"Very well, Meester Weel-yam Morgan," replied his executioners, who were aiming low, on purpose – "FUEGO!"

The first volley shattered Morgan's knees. He collapsed snarling and writhing. "See, Meester Morgan?" giggled a voice from above. "We made you kneel, didn't we?" Over the next few minutes as he lay writhing, four more bullets slammed into Morgan, all very carefully aimed to miss vitals. Finally an executioner walked up and emptied a Tommy gun clip into Morgan's back. Castro had saddled Rebel army Comandante Camilo Cienfuegos with the unhappy task of arresting his friend Huber Matos after the latter's "treason." Cienfuegos was right up there with the Castro brothers and Che in the Revolutionary hierarchy. He'd landed on the Granma expedition from Mexico then fought in the Sierra from day one, climaxing the rebellion by commanding rebel forces in the decisive "battle" (skirmish, actually, like all the others) of Santa Clara that finally forced Batista to lose hope and flee the island. Camilo actually entered Havana before Castro, where he promptly took command of the military headquarters at Camp Colombia.

Camilo Cienfuegos was handsome, charismatic, and in the eyes of many, actually outshone Fidel at early Revolutionary rallies, often stealing the limelight with his ready smile and humor. "*Simpatico*," is the term Cubans use for Camilo Cienfuegos' personality. Castro seemed to recognize this and actually turned to Camilo one day on the podium during a rally, "*Voy bien, Camilo?*" Fidel asked (am I doing OK, Camilo?) Such deference was--to say the least-- not a Castro trademark.

Camilo had flown to Camaguey from Havana for the hateful task of arresting his friend and ally Matos. The two had often discussed, with growing alarm, what they saw as the Communist usurpation of the Cuban Revolution. Once in Camaguey, Camilo had a violent row with Raul Castro, whom he'd always loathed. They were on the verge of fisticuffs and drawn pistols when finally separated.

On the flight back to Havana after he dutifully arrested Matos, Camilo Cienfuegos disappeared without a trace. His plane crashed and vanished, said the authorities, though the evening had

excellent weather according to all records. The Castro brothers made a big show of a search and rescue but nothing turned up. To many, including Huber Matos, Camilo's death seemed much too convenient. To this day Matos (along with most Cuban-exiles) blame Fidel and Raul for Camilo's death.

Cienfuegos was too obviously their competitor for leadership. Interestingly, two of Camilo's loyal lieutenants died in "accidents" within days of their commander's disappearance. The head of Camaguey's small airport, from where Camilo had taken off, was also suspicious and was starting to ask questions about the rescue effort. Two weeks after Camilo's disappearance, he was found with a bullet through his head. His death was ruled a "suicide." Camilo Cienfuegos was far from the last Fidelista Comandante to run afoul of Fidel's megalomania.

Arnaldo Ochoa was the Cuban General widely credited with Cuba's victories in both The Angolan Civil War and in Ethiopia's early crushing of the Eritrean rebellion. "Every officer in the Cuban armed forces admired Ochoa, " according to Cuban defector General Rafael Del Pino, who was close to Ochoa both personally and professionally. "General Ochoa always fulfilled his duty. He was an austere individual devoted to military life and his hands are not stained with blood."

They say he was a soldiers' general, who always showed genuine interest in the welfare of his men and so had the respect and admiration of the lowliest troops. Ochoa was also close and on very friendly terms with both Fidel and Raul Castro, the latter being Ochoa's immediate superior, whom the General always affectionately called "jefe." Besides his African ventures, Arnaldo Ochoa had fought in the Sierra as a Rebel and helped crush the Escambray peasant rebellion in 1961. In 1963 he infiltrated Venezuela to train and lead guerrillas trying to overthrow Romulo Betancourt. Later he transferred to Nicaragua where he led the fight against the Contras. In 1980 Fidel himself had personally awarded General Ochoa with the medal officially naming him a "Hero of the Revolution."

In the dawn hours of July 13, 1989 General Arnaldo T. Ochoa was executed by a firing squad outside of Havana.

In brief, he'd grown too big for his britches. Even Stalin could tolerate (or perhaps never quite figured out how to eliminate, or perhaps even feared) a Zhukov. Nothing of the sort with Fidel Castro and his generals, no matter how battle-hardened or loyal.

A court martial had found Ochoa guilty of , "Corruption and dishonest use of economic resources," of "departing from the principles of the Revolution" and of "committing grave moral and legal violations of socialist law." The official charge was drug smuggling, and Ochoa was almost certainly guilty. In Africa, Ochoa had used black marketing of everything from Elephant tusks to diamonds to liquor to help finance his military operations. He obviously had approval for these ventures from on high.

By 1989, U.S. Federal prosecutors had uncovered the Cuban Military's role in Cocaine smuggling into the U.S. Fidel and Raul watched the case building against them with growing alarm. So they served up Ochoa (and Comandante Tony De la Guardia who was executed alongside him) as scapegoats. In fact, some of the evidence used against Ochoa at his trial is rumored to have originated with the FBI.

Rafael Del Pino mentions another reason for Ochoa's elimination. In the defecting Air Force General's very well-informed opinion ,Castro executed Ochoa, "to rid himself of an independent-minded man while diverting public attention from the island's mounting problems. Castro used the excuse of corruption to destroy Ochoa because he often chose his own course in making decisions. Ochoa was a pragmatic, nonideological man who was flexible enough to recognize the sense behind Gorbachev's reforms of the time. Even worse, Ochoa, like many other Cuban

military officers, was trained in the Soviet Union and had close ties to the Soviet leaders then involved in the reforms."

That Glasnost and Perestroika stuff could be contagious, in other words.

Naturally Ochoa's and De la Guardia's deaths did nothing to curb Cuba's role in drug smuggling. On December 3, 1998, Colombian police seized seven tons of cocaine in Cartagena, Colombia. They found that the shipment was consigned to a Cuban state-owned venture and was destined for the U.S. In 1996 a federal prosecutor in south Florida told the Miami Herald. "The case we have against Fidel and Raul Castro right now is much stronger than the one we had against Manuel Noriega in 1988." Four grand juries at the time had disclosed Cuba's role in Drug smuggling into the U.S. The Clinton administration, hell bent on cozying up to Castro at the time, refused to press ahead with the case against the Castro brothers' dope trafficking.

Castro's career in terrorism started while he was a student at the University of Havana. He's credited with the murder of fellow student, Manolo Castro, and the attempted murder of Leonel Gomez, whom he shot through the throat but who survived. Both were Castro's rivals for leadership in a University student group. Both were shot from behind in ambushes. University policeman, Fernandez Caral, had witnessed the shootings, was prepared to testify and was himself murdered by Fidel Castro on July 7th 1948. The off-duty Caral sat on his doorstep with his 5 year old son on his knee when Fidel Castro approached and shot him point-blank in the chest. Raphael Diaz-Balart, Castro's brother-in-law at the time, recalls an agitated Fidel bursting into his apartment that day. "You gotta hide me!" Castro blurted. "I just killed Caral!"

That same year Castro traveled to Bogota, Colombia where he was among the ringleaders in the famous *Bogotazo*, a Communist inspired riot that ended up killing 5,000 people. Castro's July 26th Movement (his anti-Batista revolutionary group, named after the failed attack on Cuba's Moncada military barracks on July 26th 1953 that touched off his rebellion against Batista) was actually a pioneer in 20th century terrorism. They carried off among the first airplane hijackings in history. In the last months of 1958 members of Castro's movement hijacked three different *Cubana* airliners at gunpoint. The last one was a flight from Miami to Varadero that was diverted at gunpoint to rebel-held territory in Cuba's eastern Oriente province. Despite the pilot's frantic pleas the plane was forced to attempt a landing on a tiny airstrip near Raul Castro's rebel camp, where it crashed in a huge fireball. 17 of the 20 passengers died in the explosion.

A few months earlier Castro's rebels kidnapped 50 U.S. citizens near Guantanamo. Most were Marines and Navy men on leave. A few were civilian workers from a U.S. mining company headquartered nearby. Though the term was not in vogue at the time, Castro's guerrillas used these American hostages as "human shields" against Batista's air force's sporadic bombings of rebel-held areas. And it worked. The last thing Batista wanted was more raging by the U.S. media against him--not that it could have gotten much worse.

Castro had only been in power two months when he started sending armed guerrillas to attempt the overthrow of neighbouring nations. The Dominican Republic, Panama, Nicaragua, Haiti and Venezuela were the early targets. In fact Castro's very first trip abroad as head of state was to Caracas where on January 25th, 1959 he implored then Venezuelan President Romulo Betancourt to join his "master plan against the gringos!" Basically this involved massive loans, financial aid and shipments of free oil to Castro from Venezuela. Betancourt balked and no sooner had Castro returned home empty handed than he was planning subversion in Venezuela, including assassination attempts against Betancourt.

It took Hugo Chavez to finally enlist with Castro's plan. In 2004 Cuba got 1.3 billion in essentially free oil from Venezuela. By mid 2005, 160,000 barrels of oil were flowing from Venezuela to Cuba daily. This is much more oil than Cuba's refineries can process, because most

of this oil is resold to Central American nations by Cuba, who pockets the handsome profit. Here's the second half of the "master plan against the gringo's." that Castro had originally proposed to Romulo Betancourt.

Castro's subversion, not just of his neighbours, but throughout Latin America, the Middle East and Africa, reached a point where a U.S. defence Department estimates that 42,000 foreign guerrillas and terrorists have received their training in Cuba. Not that Castro's own home-grown terrorists have been exactly idle.

In November 17th 1962, the FBI uncovered a terrorist plot that targeted Manhattans's Grand Central Terminal and Statue of Liberty , along with department stores Macy's, Gimbels and Bloomindales. The plotters had 12 detonators and 500 kilos of TNT. The explosions were planned for November 27th 1962, the day after Thanksgiving, the busiest shopping day of the year. The chief plotter was Roberto Santiesteban, chief aide to Cuba's U.N. ambassador, Carlos Lechuga. Under him were Elsa and Jose Gomez, also employed by Cuba's diplomatic mission at the U.N. The rest of the plotters belonged to The Fair Play for Cuba Committee. Had those detonators gone off, 9-11's death toll would have almost certainly taken seconds. In 2003 alone, the U.S. was forced to expel 14 Cuban "diplomats." All worked at the United Nations.

On March 19, 1976 the Los Angeles Times ran the headline "Cuban Link to Death Plot Probed." Both Republican candidates of the day, President Ford and Ronald Reagan, were to be assassinated during the Republican National Convention in San Francisco. The Emiliano Zapata Unit, a Bay Area radical- terrorist group, would make the hits. When arrested, one of the would-be assassins named Gregg Daniel Adornetto, revealed the Cuban connection. The Zapata Unit's Cuban intelligence officer was named Andres Gomez. Adornetto had met him years earlier when he'd travelled to Cuba for training and funding as a member of the Weather Underground.

Much evidence points to an earlier assassination plot by Castro against a U.S. President succeeding. "U.S. leaders who plan an eliminating Cuban leaders should not think that they are *themselves* safe!" warned Castro on Sept 7 1963. "We are prepared to answer in kind!"

Many of those closest to the early evidence (prior to the Warren Commission's) are convinced that Castro made good on his boast. "I'll tell you something that will rock you," Lyndon Johnson told Howard K. Smith in 1966. "Kennedy tried to get Castro-- but Castro got Kennedy first."

General Alexander Haig agreed with LBJ. Haig served as a military aide under both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. "As I read the secret report I felt a sense of physical shock, a rising of the hair on the back of my neck.." he writes about an incident one month after the Kennedy assassination when a classified report crossed his desk. "I walked the report over to my superiors and watched their faces go ashen. "From this moment, Al." said his superiors, "You will forget you ever read this piece of paper, or that it ever existed."

The classified intelligence report that so rattled Haig and caused so many faces to go ashen described how a few days before the Dallas assassination, Lee Harvey Oswald, accompanied by Castro intelligence agents, had been spotted in Havana, where he'd travelled from Mexico city.

Amidst a stack of declassified Soviet correspondence that Boris Yeltzin made available to President Bill Clinton in the early 90's was a letter from Jacqueline Kennedy to Nikita Khrushchev dated just ten days after the assassination. In it Mrs Kennedy assures the Soviet leader that she doesn't suspect Soviet involvement in her husband's assassination. She wrote that she was convinced the culprit was Castro.

For 34 years Markus Wolf was the chief of East Germany's foreign intelligence service, a branch of the STASI with many contacts and operations in Castro's Cuba. It was the STASI rather than the KGB that undertook the training of Castro's police and intelligence services. Wolf's autobiog-

raphy is titled, "Man Without a Face" and subtitled "The Autobiography of Communism's Greatest Spymaster." Most intelligence experts agree that the subtitle fits. Wolf was once asked about the Kennedy assassination and quickly replied. "Don't ask me --- ask Fidel Castro."

In 1966 Havana hosted the Tri-Continental Conference, a worldwide convention for guerrillas and terrorists; the first of its kind, where Castro vowed to aid any group anywhere who were fighting "colonialism, neocolonialism, and imperialism."

Among other initiatives at the Conference, Cuba formed OSPAAAL (Organization of Solidarity with the People from Africa, Asia and Latin America.) and the DLN (National Liberation Directorate.) This later was under the direction of KGB Col. Vadim Kotchergine and set up massive terrorist training camps in western Cuba. These were soon filled with guerrillas and terrorists from Al Fatah, to the Sandinistas, to El Salvador's FMLF, to the Tupamaros to the Weather Underground to the IRA and Spain's ETA. In 1968 Castro sent military instructors into Palestinian bases in Jordan to train Palestinian Fedayeen. In November 1974 Castro personally decorated his brother-in-arms, Yasir Arafat, with Cuba's highest honor, the Bay of Pigs Medal. The Egyptian newspaper Ahar Sa'ah reported in September 13, 1978 that 500 Palestinian fighters were training in Cuba.

Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, the infamous "Carlos The Jackal" known as the world's most notorious terrorist throughout the 1970's received his training in Cuba and lived in Cuba for years. Everyone from America's Black Liberation Army to Puerto Rico's Macheteros, to South Yemen's NLF, to Argentina's Monteneros, to Colombia's ELN , to Namibia's SWAPO, to the Black Panthers, To Western Sahara's Polisario to the IRA have received training and funding from Castro. "Thanks to Castro" boasted Colombia's FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*) commander *Tiro-Fijo* in a 2001 interview, "we are now a powerful army, not a hit and run band."

Scholar Walter Laquer sums it up in his work, *The Age of Terrorism*. "Multinational terrorism reached a first climax in the early 1970s. It involved close co-operation between small terrorist groups in many countries with the Libyans, Algerians, Syrians, North Koreans and Cubans acting as the paymasters and suppliers of weapons and equipment."

The U.S. State department still lists Cuba prominently among its, "State Sponsors of Terrorism."

As of mid 2005 Cuba provides haven for 77 fugitives from U.S. law including several on the FBI's most wanted listed. Among these are cop-killers Michael Finney, Charlie Hill and Joanne Chesimard along with Victor Gerena, responsible for a \$7 million heist of a Wells Fargo truck in Connecticut in 1983 as a member of the Puerto Rican terrorist group *Los Macheteros*. All requests for their extradition had been repeatedly ignored or rebuffed.

By 1976 Castro's intervention abroad became more blatant when he sent tens of thousands of troops to Africa. Most, 50,000, went to fight Jonas Savimbi's UNITA forces in Angola. Thousands more went to prop up the Marxist Mengistu regime in Ethiopia. And others were scattered throughout the continent from Guinea Bissau to Bourkina Fasso to Sierra Leone to Mozambique to Zimbabwe. All told, by 1983, Cuban troops were stationed in 20 sub-Saharan African nations. In 1988 Dr. Aubin Heyndrickx, the senior United Nations consultant on chemical warfare, documented that : "There is no doubt anymore that the Cubans are using nerve gases (Sarin) against the troops of Mr. Jonas Savimbi."

"War against the United States is my true destiny." Fidel Castro had confided to a friend in 1958 while still a rebel in the hills "When this war's over I'll start that much bigger war." (Please note:

Castro said this before any of the alleged "bullying" by the U.S. that leftists claim as the reason he turned to Communism and the Soviet Union.)

After defecting in 1964, Castro's own sister brought the unmistakable message to Congress. "Fidel's feeling of hatred for this country cannot even be imagined by you Americans," she testified to the House Committee on Un-American Activities. "His intention--his OBSESSION--is to destroy the U.S.!"

According to General Rafael del Pino, one time head of Castro's Air Force who defected in 1987, during the U.S. invasion of Grenada Castro ordered military plans for the destruction of the Turkey Point Nuclear Plant South of Miami. His Nuclear weapons having been snatched back by Khrushchev in October of 1962, Castro was here opting for the next best thing. "I want to do something that the Yankees will remember for the rest of their lives!" Del Pino recalls Castro raving. "And when we're gone, history will remind the Yankees that we were the only ones who made them pay dearly for their imperialistic arrogance around the world!"

"Together Iran and Cuba can bring America to her knees!" raved Castro to a thunderous ovation at Tehran University in August 2001.

"Iran is strengthening her economic and political relations with Cuba, and there exist other areas for cooperation." Declared Iranian Majlis Speaker Gholam-Ali Haddad Adel in a meeting with the visiting Cuban Vice President, Jose Ramon Fernandez, on January 16, 2005.

Cuban-born Humberto Fontova came to the United States when he was six years old and grew up in New Orleans. He is the author of the new book *Fidel: Hollywood's Favourite Tyrant*.



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