The Cuban Revolution

Cuba - Chronology

1898  Cuban independence from Spain
1934–1944  Fulgencio Batista in power
1952  Batista returns to power in military coup
1953  Fidel Castro leads failed attack on Moncada Barracks August
1955  Founding of the 26th of July Movement
1956  Castro returns to Cuba on the Granma with eighty-two fighters
1957  Failed Revolutionary Directorate attack on presidential palace in Havana
1959  Batista leaves for exile in Miami
1959  Guerrillas enter Havana
1959  Agrarian reform law
1961  Failed U.S.-backed Bay of Pigs invasion
1961  Castro proclaims socialist character of revolution
1961  Castro publicly embraces Marxism-Leninism
1962  Organization of American States (OAS) expels Cuba
1962  Cuban Missile Crisis
1980  Mariel boatlift
2006  Fidel Castro temporarily transfers powers due to illness
2008  Raúl Castro replaces brother Fidel as Cuban president
2014  Cuba and United States reestablish diplomatic relations
2016  Fidel Castro dies after long illness

What is Cuba’s Sin?” Fidel Castro (2003)

*In 2003, Fidel Castro gave a May Day speech that both praised Cuba’s achievements and challenged U.S. aggression toward his nation. Consider the following question: According to Castro, what has Cuban achieved in education, public health, and industry since the revolution?*

Our heroic people have struggled for 44 years from this small Caribbean island just a few miles away from the most formidable imperial power ever known. Never has the world witnessed such an unequal fight. What is Cuba’s sin? What honest person has any reason to attack her? With their own blood and the weapons seized from the enemy, the Cuban people overthrew a cruel tyranny with 80,000 men under arms, imposed by the U.S. government.

Cuba was the first territory free from imperialist domination in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the only country in the hemisphere, throughout post-colonial history, where the torturers, murderers and war criminals that took the lives of tens of thousands of people were exemplarily punished. All of the

---

1 Chronology from Becker, Marc. *Twentieth-Century Latin American Revolutions*
country’s land was recovered and turned over to the peasants and agricultural workers. The natural resources, industries and basic services were placed in the hands of their only true owner: the Cuban nation.

In less than 72 hours, fighting ceaselessly, day and night, Cuba crushed the Bay of Pigs mercenary invasion organized by a U.S. administration, thereby preventing a direct military intervention by this country and a war of incalculable consequences. In 1962, Cuba confronted with honor, and without a single concession, the risk of being attacked with dozens of nuclear weapons. It stoically endured thousands of acts of sabotage and terrorist attacks organized by the U.S. government. It thwarted hundreds of assassination plots against the leaders of the Revolution.

While under a rigorous blockade and economic warfare that have lasted for almost half a century, Cuba was able to eradicate in just one year the illiteracy that has still not been overcome in the course of more than four decades by the rest of the countries of Latin America, or the United States itself. It has brought free education to 100 percent of the country’s children. It has the highest school retention rate—over 99 percent between kindergarten and ninth grade—of all of the nations in the hemisphere. Its elementary school students rank first worldwide in the knowledge of their mother language and mathematics.

The country also ranks first worldwide with the highest number of teachers per capita and the lowest number of students per classroom. All children with physical or mental challenges are enrolled in special schools. Computer education and the use of audio visual methods now extend to all of the country’s children, adolescents and youth, in both the cities and the countryside. All citizens have the possibility of undertaking studies that will take them from kindergarten to a doctoral degree without spending a penny.

Today, the country has 30 university graduates, intellectuals and professional artists for every one there was before the Revolution. The average Cuban citizen today has at the very least a ninth-grade level of education. Not even functional illiteracy exists in Cuba. There are schools for the training of artists and art instructors throughout all of the country’s provinces, where over 20,000 young people are currently studying and developing their talent and vocation.

Infant mortality has been reduced from 60 per 1,000 live births to a rate that fluctuates between six and 6.5, which is the lowest in the hemisphere, from the United States to Patagonia. Life expectancy has increased by 15 years. Cuba is today the country with the highest number of doctors per capita in the world, with almost twice as many as those that follow closer. Our scientific centers are working relentlessly to find preventive or therapeutic solutions for the most serious diseases. Cubans will have the best health-care system in the world, and will continue to receive all services absolutely free of charge.

Discrimination against women was eradicated, and today women make up 64 percent of the country’s technical and scientific work force.
From the earliest months of the Revolution, not a single one of the forms of racial discrimination copied from the south of the United States was left intact. In recent years, the Revolution has been particularly striving to eliminate any lingering traces of the poverty and lack of access to education that afflicted the descendants of those who were enslaved for centuries, creating objective differences that tended to be perpetuated. Soon, not even a shadow of the consequences of that terrible injustice will remain.

Cuban blood was shed together with that of citizens of numerous Latin American countries, and together with the Cuban and Latin American blood of Che Guevara, murdered on instructions from U.S. agents in Bolivia, when he was wounded and being held prisoner after his weapon had been rendered useless by a shot received in battle.