Castro’s Mission And Downfall

Born the third illegitimate child of a wealthy plantation owner and his mistress maid, he was afforded a privileged upbringing. Sending lots of time with the laborers on his father’s lands, he developed empathy the poor Cubans. While attending boarding school, he soon proved his rebellion for authority and was expelled, only to return to Cuba. Young Fidel eventually attended law school where he was an activist for anti-American and anti- Imperialism.

Castro’s Mission

Castro’s interests in politics would lead him to join the Party of the Cuban People in 1947 where he developed a keenness for reform and social justice. Relentlessly fighting for social reform and railed against neoliberalism, to reign supreme. Castro would then be considered a savior of social justice serving as Cuba’s dictator for almost half a century. Yet, others would strongly disagree and label him a destructor of Cuban society, most predominately, its economy’, labelling him a tyrant and dictator. Considerably the word dictator is synonymous with brutality and despotism. This reaction is typical since history has proven that many of the world’s dictators were nothing less than harsh. An examination of dictators in the Caribbean can be and provide evidence of this. Raphael Trujillo, the man Castro would attempt to help overthrow, lead the Dominican Republic for over three decades. Essentially, ordered the 1937 Haitian Massacre where some 15,000 Haitians residing in the frontier of the Dominican Republic was murdered, due to his dismay of blacks and his need to whitewash the border (Turtis, 2003). Similarly, was the Duvaliers in Haiti. The father son duo ruled Haiti for nearly 30 years. A period considered the most stable political period in the country’s history. Nicholls describes in his article Haiti: The Rise and Fall of Duvalierism, the destruction the two bestowed upon the Haitians. Explaining that their regime was nothing shy of definite torture, corruption, financial misappropriation which resulted in great delays for a once determined country (1986). Together the Duvaliers murdered over 30,000 Haitians, imprisoned thousands and forced even more to flee the country (Nicolls, 1986). Their selfishness and greed eventually crippled the already punishing country and decades later, still no sign of stability visible for Haitians. Unlike these dictators, Castro envisioned introducing Cuba to communism, “political and economic ideologies that find their origin in Karl Marx’s theory of revolutionary socialism, which advocates a proletariat overthrow of capitalist structures within a society, societal and communal ownership and governance of the means of production, and the eventual establishment of a classless society” (Merriam, Webster, 2006).

Castro was dedicated to ridding the Government of corruption and the United States meddling in Cuban affairs (Perez- Stable, 2004). Although, in his bid for reformation of Cuban society, he would find himself in many fail attempts. In an interview with Barbara Walters (1977) Castro quoted, “Batista came to power by force, through a coup d’état. He looted the country. All his acts were illegal” (p. 30). Castro felt that Batista neglected the needs to the country masses, unlawfully made himself president and was guinea pig for the U.S. government in Cuba. In his efforts to improve his country, Fidel formed a rival group consisting of diverse youngsters, the movement planned to attack the government. Many attempts to overthrow Batista would fail but Fidel defied the odds by never being killed, tortured or executed. His second attack much like the first, also failed. After being arrested when found in the Sierra Maestra and trailed for his

actions, he was sentenced to 15 years, but he was released in 1955 by Batista in show of supreme power (Hourly History, 2017). After his release, Castro and his brother Raul met Che Guevara, an Argentine doctor influenced by Marxism (Padgett, 2016). Eventually, Castro and Guevara quickly became fond of each other's stories as they shared similar ideologies. Guevara was there to help him fight for Cuba. Castro travelled to Miami, where he raised funds for the revolution from Cuban expats by promising to overthrow Batista and restoring structure in the country (Padgett, 2016). With his plans in motion, Castro would return to Cuba and immediately equipped himself with a "cache of arms". In 1956, Fidel along with his brother Raul Castro, Che Guevara and 79 others gathered on a leaky vessel heading to Cuba from Mexico. With only one-quarter of his original crew, Castro retrieved deep into the Sierra Maestra to avoid capture and re-strategize. This decision strengthened the revolutionaries and helped them to gain control of the army base in La Plata (Padgett, 2016). With the aid of rebellious Cubans, Castro ensured that Batista fled the country. After 3 years of an ongoing battle, it was over, Castro was now in power.

Upon releasing Cuba from the reign of economic and political hegemony of the United States, Castro's first error was being dishonest about not wanting to be in control of the country. But that was overlooked as the people wanted him to lead the country since he led them from the U. S backed Batista regime. Castro's detest for white supremacy led him to instilled national pride in Cuba, which was not visible prior to revolution. By labeling the country as an Afro-Latin nation, they would acknowledge their African heritage alongside their Spanish ancestry. Fidel fused national identity with ethnicity to create a cohesive nation (Parker, 2008). Being that Fidel was aware of the prevalence of racism, he launched reforms that were intended to eradicate racial segregation in the country. Afro-Cubans benefitted heavily from the introduction of the reforms. New legislation was put in place to cease the discrimination against black Cubans. Before the revolution, Afro-Cubans marginalized and amongst the poorest and less educated in the country, lacking social and medical care. They were not afforded the same opportunities as their fellow white and mulatto countrymen (Council of Hemispheric Affairs, 2011). However, with Castro's social reform set in motion, black Cubans were now able to receive fair employment opportunity, proper medical and social care. Thus, improving the quality of life for the Afro Cubans. As of 2015, World Health Organization stated that Cuba had a life expectancy of 79 years, one of the highest in Latin America and the Caribbean. WHO additionally mentioned that Cuba is one of the countries with the largest number of centenarians in relation to its population. " The number of physicians per 100,000 population is 160 for Latin America and 590 for Cuba. Cuba is the nation that has the highest number of doctors per capita in the world" (Lamrani, 2016). Without hesitation, it should be noted that Castro's aim for reform, drastically improved the quality of life for all Cubans. His implementations were not limited to just blacks but to strengthen the country's social aspects.

With Castro's reign a state-owned educational system was formed, nationalizing all private institutions at all levels of education. All Cubans were offered the same luxury in terms of educational gain, funded by the government. This move was one of the best that Castro put in place. According to the World Bank, Cuba is on record has had the best educational system in the Caribbean and Latin America. It was also noted that Cuba has the highest number of faculty staff amongst teachers in the region. The report also applauds Cuba for its continual favorable outcomes in the fields of education and health. In fact, the country's social services ministry has exceeded those of most of evolving and, in some sectors, are even comparable to the social services provided within the larger and more advanced countries. The country's universal access to education and medical services has assisted Cuba to be successful in a

universal literacy rate, advanced medication and healthcare and access to safe drinking water.

Castro’s Downfall

With the 1959, Cuban Revolution came the backlash of wanting to be a free independent state. Similarly, to Haiti, Cuba would suffer at the hands of the colony masters. Castro was aware that hardship would be evident and opted to create an even playing field for all Cubans. His government coldhearted seized private land, nationalized hundreds of private companies and terminated self-employment. Hundreds of thousands of middle- and upper-class Cubans left the country because they were deprived on the lifestyle that were afforded to them before the revolution (Perez- Stable, 2004). Many of those privately-owned companies were local subsidiaries of U.S. corporations. The Eisenhower Administration did not take kindly to Castro’s decisions and in return-imposed trade restrictions on everything except food and medical supplies. The U.S. government became concerned that Castro would eventually cause to the Caribbean to consider the new style of governance and ordered clandestine operations against Fidel on March 17, 1960. Castro turned to the Soviet Union where he expanded trade instead which the Americans saw as a threat (Perez- Stable, 2004). The U.S. final respond to Castro was to sever all diplomatic ties with Cuba as a result, during the height of the Cold War, a long period of tension between the Western democratic style governance, led by the United States and the communist countries of Eastern Europe that was led by the Soviet Union. This would hurt the country in the decades to come.

The United States would secretly attempt to topple Castro. A botched attempt to overthrow Castro by training Cuban refugees for an attack took place in April 1961 (Perez- Stable, 2004). This attempt is famously was known as the Bay of Pigs. Launched from Guatemala, the attack went south from the start resulting in invaders being defeated within 2 days by Cuban armed forces under the direct command of Castro. There would be many plots to humiliate the Cuban leader by the American heads. The President of the United States, John F. Kennedy was quoted in Parker’s article referring to Cuba as “the most dangerous are in the west” (2008, p.140). In 1962, President Kennedy issued a permanent trade embargo on Cuba. The Cuban economy had relied heavily on American assistance, but it was now a thing of the past using. Cuba’s relationships with the Soviet Union and other countries kept the country floating for decades, despite the attempts of Americans to black-market the country. The trade embargo had a direct effect on the country but with Castro managed to maintain economic stability, before the country sustained a boom in the early 1970’s (Perez-Stable, 2004). By the 1980s the revolution seemed to have stalled and despite many social cultivations, the economy remained stagnant. The sugarcane plantations were not meeting any demands which forced mills to close (Padgett, 2016). Residents began frustrated and although some turned to domestic trafficking of illicit items, many migrated to Florida with approval from Castro (Guerra, 2005). Cubans lacked access to water and basic needs of the citizens were not being met which resulted in many people “bathing in homemade mixture of cucumber juice, vinegar and salt” (Guerra, 2005, p.149). About one hundred and twenty-five thousand was reported to have fled the country. Cubans immigrating the U.S was received with open arms as an insult to Castro and his governance. By the early 1990’s, Cuba was heavily feeling the raft of a decreased economic state as the Soviet Union crashed. Cuba’s most supported ally was no longer and brought on a crisis for Cuba. Guerra (2005) reports that Many felt that Castro would run to the U.S. for help, but he stood strong and strived to run his country the best he knew despite financial hardships.

Financial insufficiencies have resulted in the relationship between the state and the youth being filled with escalating tension and dissatisfaction. Cuban youth consists of the population majority. The relationship between the state and the youth is filled with escalating tension and dissatisfaction, as they are not happy the dictator style government. They want the right to choose their leaders and better themselves. Gonzalez & McCarthy (2004) quoted “As the 1990s wore on, the attitudes, norms, and behavior of more and more youths began to deviate from what the older generation of leaders wanted and had expected from the children of the Revolution” (p. 37). They are being drawn away from the culture norms and crave a new experience. Gonzalez & McCarthy (2004) also states, “The retreat from politics by Cuban youth also poses problems for a democratic transition in the post-Castro era. Although opposition to a successor communist regime may intensify, the regime’s opponents will be severely handicapped if they are unable to mobilize the active support of the rest of society, especially the young. As Fernández notes, a society cannot create democratic institutions, norms, and practices without popular participation. It may well take the rise of a new generation before democracy can begin to take root on the island” (p.44). The authors expressed the importance of youths the country to be diverse as it relates to their involvement in society. Even in a communist regime there is a need to relinquish some political power, as the youths long for democracy in the country. As long the disconnect continues between the government and the country’s youth and visible economic problems there will continue to disengage of young people.

Conclusion

While many are convinced that Castro was a totalitarian oppressor, it should be noted that many avenues discourage such views and proves him to be a legend in the Caribbean and national hero in the country that he fought endlessly to liberate from social diaspora, government corruption and the manipulation of the United States of America. His introduction of Communism increased many social aspects of the country. A self-sustaining country with the will and drives to fund them. Cuba had stood out the Caribbean as the first successful communist country. Cuba’s universal education and healthcare are available to all and amongst the best in the Latin American and Caribbean region. Even though Cuba has suffered economically, it can be understood that was a direct result of the trade embargo placed by the United States. Cuba to major achievements in healthcare, education, nutrition, culture that became a model for the world. Listed on the globe as of the poorest country, they are only poor in their relations with great America. After leading Cuba for nearly fifty years, Fidel Castro surrendered his power to his brother Raul Castro. His decision was not by choice but rather the inevitable, death. Cuba would embark on a series of reforms that have slowly opened the country’s economy to private capital. Trade and investment by China and Venezuela revived the sugar industry and expanded sales for Havana oil (Binns, 2015). In 2015, Raul formally restored ties with the United States. Although Cuba is still in a state of hardship, only time can tell how will the country eventually advance itself and Cubans.