



# Castro 2

1

# Foreign Policy

# Ideology

- Neorealism
  - States are the most important part of world politics
  - International system lacks strong central power
- Anti-imperialism
  - Strongly supported revolutionary forces in Africa and Asia
  - Model of the Latin American independence struggle
- Deep distrust of institutions



## Soviet Union and US

- 1959: alliance with USSR (intensified in 1960 to counter the US)
- US embargo forced dependence on the Soviet Union
  - US viewed Cuba as a puppet of Moscow
- Cuban Missile Crisis (October 1962)
  - Soviet nuclear-missiles were installed on Cuba to discourage US invasion
  - Closest ever to global nuclear war
  - Missiles were removed, Castro was furious
  - Castro didn't trust Kennedy
  - Operation Mongoose



# Military Power

- From 1975-1990, Cuba deployed over 300,000 troops overseas
- Cuba won the three wars they fought in Africa (twice in Angola and once in Ethiopia)
- Bay of Pigs (April 1961)
  - January 1961: America severed diplomatic relations with Cuba
  - Full-scale American invasion of Cuba by 1,400 trained Cuban exiles
  - Invaders were greatly outnumbered by Castro's troops and surrendered within 72 hours
  - Plausible deniability (no American troops)
  - America could no longer claim moral high ground, Castro had been right

# Historiography + Historical Perspective

- Kenneth Waltz: founder of Neorealism
- Castro: “The imperialists are everywhere in this world”
- US government: taking down Castro is the only solution
  - Kennedy: “I think he [Castro] should be condemned. I think he is a source of maximum danger.”
- “He’s his own man, we cannot dictate to him.”  
-Mikhail Gorbachev

# Discussion Question #1

To what extent was Castro's ideology reflected in his foreign policy actions?



# 2

## Economic Policies

Castro's Economic Policies and their Effects in Cuba

# Economy in Severe Trouble

- Unemployment
  - Graduate unemployment
  - Urban
- Rural poverty
- **Inequity in landownership**
- Unfavorable trade conditions
  - With USA
  - Lack of diversity in trade



# Cuban Economic Background - Historical Perspective

- General anxiety plagued Cuba in regards to domestic economic interests
  - Cuban planters, bankers, business elites, etc.
  - Middle class (professionals e.g. doctors, lawyers, etc.)
- Foreign economic pressure and control
  - E.g. the Mafia, US corporations
- Foreign economic destabilization attempts
  - E.g. USA, its L. American allies



# Castro's Response to Domestic Economic Issues

- Reassured Cuban workers he was not a communist (until May 1961); land reform aimed at weakening biggest landowners to favour smaller ones
- Instructed anti-Batista forces to respect private property; **nationalized landholdings**; promoted Cuban-owned smaller plantations
- Creation of jobs
  - Temporary reopening of casinos, brothels
  - **Land reform and redistribution**



# Results of Foreign Pressure on Cuban Economy

- Cuba had **sought to diversify their trade routes** and partners
  - Trade w the USSR
- **The US Embargo + the Sugar Quota (1961)**
  - Improved relations; **China and the USSR**
    - NYT: Cuba as “too risky.”
  - Only a short-term solution
  - Long-term difficulty in maintaining a diversified trade economy



# The Policies

## → **Moncada Programme of 1953**

- Nationalizing major industries which had all been previously US-owned
- Land redistribution

## → **Agrarian Reform Laws (1959-1963)**

- Isaac Saney: Dominant force was the Cuban working class in revolutionary struggle

# Castro's Economic Policies Summary

- Ended Cuban economic subservience to US in regards to trade
- **Rapid industrialization and nationalization**
- **Land reform and redistribution**
- Communist influence
- Trade with USSR



## Discussion Question #2

Discuss the impact of foreign powers on Castro's economic policies and actions.



# 3

## Social/Cultural Policies

## Castro as a Character

- Extremely **nationalist** and fiercely proud of Cuba
- Despised capitalism
- Also despised the US
- Biased towards socialism
  - Had communist tendencies
- **“New Man’s Theory”**; created by Castro and Che
  - The idea that Cubans should no longer work for themselves but for the good of Cuba/society
- His personality/way he presented himself was as one who wasn’t power hungry, but intent on improving the situation of the country



## Problems Before the Revolution

- 1959: **Literacy rates** were between 60% and 76%.
- Medical education, data, and care was severely lacking.
  - Inadequate, disjointed, and (too) competitive **healthcare**; out of the 6000 doctors in Cuba, half of them left.
- Cuba had a **corrupt and unequal social order**, often stunted by foreign entanglement.



## The Literacy Campaign - Overview

- January 1st - December 22nd, 1961
- Goal: To abolish illiteracy
- > 1 million Cubans became teachers or students
- 707 thousand Cubans became literate
- **20% → 3.9% illiteracy rate within the year**
- Enacted with: “Literary Brigades”



# The Literary Brigades

- “Literacy Brigades” were sent out to improve education and literacy throughout cuba. Put into four groups:
  - Conrado Benitez Brigades; young volunteers who helped literacy in the **countryside**
  - Popular Alphabetizers; adults who volunteered in cities or towns
  - “Fatherland or Death” Brigade; adults that were paid to teach in rural locations
  - School Teacher Brigades; teachers who oversaw the organization of the campaign.



# Castro's War on Religion

- Catholic by birth but **Hated religion**
- Cuba had a strong Catholic presence
- 1976: Constitution adopted, Cuba decreed atheist
- Abolished Christmas, eradicated churches, purged churches
- One **couldn't join the Communist Party** without declaring that they were atheist.





*The absence of a national public health plan; semi-official and private services that were better than those provided by the government; an orientation toward curative medicine; abandonment of rural and some urban areas; individual medicine; mercantilism; competition between private services; administrative centralization with a public unaware of treatments that could benefit them.*



## Health Care

- **Ministry of Public Health (MINSAP)** created in 1960
  - **Doctors sent to rural areas**
  - Doubled vaccines given
- First task: creating services.
  - 1963; 122 rural centers, 42 rural hospitals
  - Free and funded by state
- 1961: Anti-Malaria Campaign
- **Free tuition**/emphasis on education → A lot of new students
- **Medical instructors contracted from other countries**





*“I am a **Marxist-Leninist** and shall be one until the end of my life.”*

*“Marxism or **scientific socialism** has become the revolutionary movement of the working class.”*

- *Fidel Castro*



## Enactment of Ideology

- Castro nationalised foreign companies (ex. Sugar, oil)
  - Government took over private enterprises
  - **Unified control** made it easier for Castro to make decisions
- **Agrarian reform**: put cap on amount of land that one could own
- Cuban People's Party; **Single party system**
  - Also tried and jailed dissenters
  - Batista officials



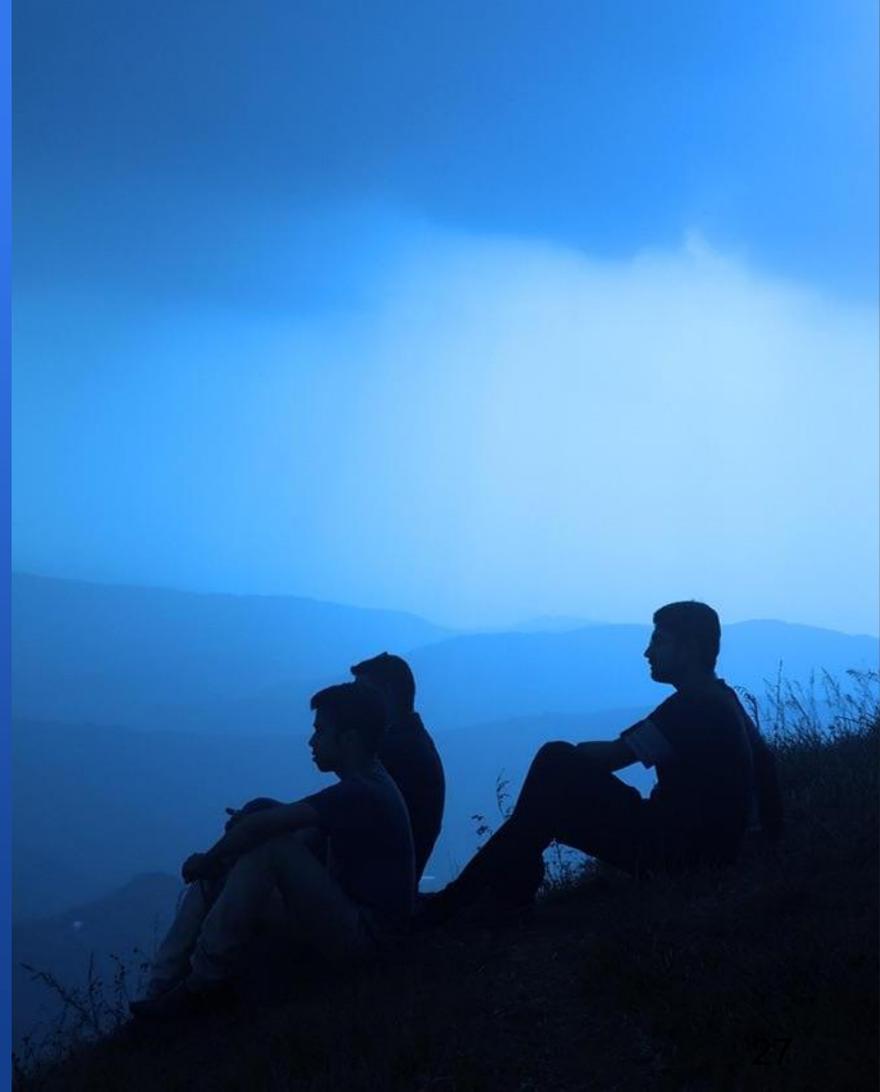
# Was Castro Good for the People?

- Poder Popular: Popular Power
  - A union/organization/movement/council, etc., that works as a form of worker's democracy
- Peter Roman:
  - Cuba's poder popular/municipal assembly (National Assembly of People's Power) was heavily represented by the people, and socialism allowed for the good of the entire population instead of one or two groups.



## Discussion Question #3

To what extent do you agree with the claim that “ideology was the most important factor in the rise to power of single-party leaders”?



# 4

## Minority and Women Policies

## Women in Cuba

- Only 17% of Cuban women were working before the revolution by 1990 women held 40%
  - A high percent included highly educated and skilled professions
- One year after the revolution, the new government created the **Federation of Cuban Women**, led by Vilma Espin
- Government provided daycare centers for women who worked



# Women in Cuba

- The new Cuban constitution **condemned gender or racial discrimination**
  - Punishment was up to two years in prison according to the criminal code.
- Cuba launched massive literacy campaign targeted towards women, minorities, and poor
  - Cuba became **“the first territory free of illiteracy”** according to UNESCO in 1961
- By 1970 young women made up fifty-five percent of high school students and forty percent of those attending institutions of higher education.

## Women in Cuba

- Cuba became the first country to **legalize abortion in 1965**
- 1975- the Family Code recognized the equal rights of both spouses to education and career
  - required both to share household duties and child care, and legalized divorce



## Afro-Cuban Rights

- 1959 outlawed all forms institutional racism
- 1976 Afro-Cuban political representation on the Council of State was 12.9%
  - Increased to nearly 30% in 2003
- By 1981 over 11% of blacks and 10% of mulattos graduated high school
  - Higher than the 9% of whites
- Still prevalent culture of racism
  - Reflected in afro-cuban art including hip-hop

# Afro-Cuban Rights

- Many afro-cuban artists were welcomed by castro
  - Nicolás Guillén exiled in the batista regime welcomed back and served 25 years on the Unión Nacional de Escritores de Cuba

## Campaigns Against Homosexuals

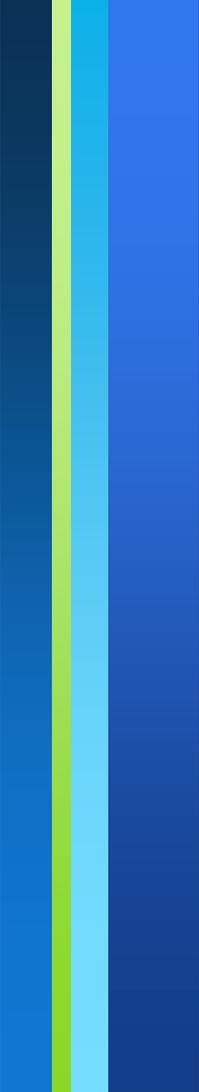
- In the 1960's thousands of homosexuals, and Jehovah's witnesses were forced into military service at UMAP camps
  - Shut down in the late 1960's
- In the late 1960's Castro government censored art from sodomitic writers and effeminate dancers
- 1980 Homosexuals comprised a large portion of those in the Mariel Boatlift



## Discussion Question #4

How has Cuban treatment of women and minorities surprised you? Compare and contrast these policies to other authoritarian states





Interactive!!

# Thanks!

## Any questions?



# Credits

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