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two thousand acres of sugar land which will be reduced by my own law to a thousand acres.

We are not a Communist movement and we differ from Communism in several essential respects. Believing in an agrarian reform for hundreds of thousands of landless farm families is not Communism, it is common sense.

With the upheaval in Cuba's economy caused by ex-dictator Batista's corruption and thievery, and the revolutionary adjustments we are making to raise living standards, we face many difficulties.

I know that the people who love me today may turn against me later. When they decide they do not want me, I will step down.

Democracy is my ideal—my acts prove it. We have a free press in Cuba. We have free ideas and free religious beliefs.

I want free elections. The faster we can solve our problems, the faster the elections will come.

I am vitally interested in the people of Cuba—my people. This interest goes back to my early life on my father's farm, where I was born on August 13, 1927. I used to listen to the servants' problems, and I told them: "Some day, I will see that all of you have shoes."

I started my education in a Catholic school at Santiago de Cuba, and I completed my early schooling at the Colegio Dolores, which was operated by Jesuit priests.

It was there that I wore my first uniform—a navy-blue outfit with a Sam Browne belt—and I played the bugle in the school band.

In 1942 I went to Havana for my high school education and attended the Colegio Belen, also operated by the Jesuits.

In the autumn of 1945 I entered the University of Havana to study law, but my studies were interrupted in 1947, when I joined the expeditionary force which was planning to invade the Dominican Republic and overthrow its dictator, Rafael Leonidas Trujillo.

We failed. Cuba's President, Ramon Grau San Martin, had our landing craft intercepted by Cuban navy frigates, but I jumped overboard with my sub-machine gun.

A few days later I was studying again at the university.

The Illustrated Weekly of India, December 18, 1950

to fight for it and stand up for his own ideal. There is no freedom without fight.

Back in Havana, I fell in love with Maria Diaz Balart, a philosophy student in the university there and we were married on October 12, 1948. On our honeymoon in Miami I had to pawn my watch and other valuables, but they were happy days.

By 1950 I had graduated and was now fully fledged lawyer. My name-plate read proudly: Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, and I devoted my time to defending the poor people. I handled most of my cases without a fee.

In March, 1952, Fulgencio Batista seized power in Cuba by a military coup and began one of the bloodiest phases of dictatorship in the country's history.

Nine days later I filed a brief before the Court of Constitutional Guarantees in Havana in which I requested that Batista's coming to power be declared unconstitutional. I advocated prison terms totalling a hundred years against him.

From that day on, my office became the centre of attention and persecution. The Cuban Revolution had begun, and we, young patriots, decided to fight Batista and all he stood for.

I sold my law books and car, and my brother Raul and 150 friends raised nearly £600 for guns and ammunition and uniforms.

July 26, 1953, was the centenary of the birth of Jose Marti, the apostle of liberty in Cuba, and our saint. At dawn I led a column of thirteen cars to the walls of Santiago's overcrowded Moncada barracks, where a thousand Patista soldiers were stationed.

But we were betrayed. Herded together like cattle, twenty of us were arrested and taken away to await trial.

The Illustrated Weekly of

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And she, imperturbable, for to die for the

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# I, FIDEL CASTRO

Our young revolutionary movement had been destroyed. We had thought that with the £6,000 we had collected we could liberate all of Cuba. But we were not liked yet. We could still breathe—and even a hard prison sentence would not be able to destroy our fight for freedom.

All of us knew that we had to turn the trial into a tribunal for Batista's cruel dictatorship. I have been called an actor—but I was never asked.

"Nobody yet," I said to the United States

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I gave a three-hour speech in court. I denounced dictatorship and declared we were born in a free country and we would rather see Cuba sink to the bottom of the ocean than consent to be anybody's slaves.

The judge was unmoved and sentenced me to fifteen years' imprisonment.

Liberation was still six years away, and Batista's reign of terror and torture tightened. Comrades of mine were castrated and had their eyes yanked out, but they continued being a thousand times more men than all the executioners put together and refused to betray their friends.

Batista's evil men couldn't break the bravery of the men so they probed the bravest of the women.

With a bleeding human eye in his hand a sergeant went with several others to the cell where a woman patriot, Haydee Santamaria, was held.

The sergeant showed the eye to Haydee and told her: "This is your brother's and if you do not tell us what he refused to tell us we will yank out the other eye."

She, who loved her valiant brother above everything, replied full of dignity: "If you yanked out one eye and he did not tell you anything, much less will I tell you."

Cuba—my people, this America, goes back to my early life on my father's farm, where I was born... on August 13, 1927, I used to listen to the servants' problems, and I told them: "Some day, I will see that all of you have shoes."

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We failed. Cuba's President, Ramon Grau San Martin, had our landing craft intercepted by Cuban navy frigates, but I jumped overboard with my sub-machine gun.

A few days later I was studying again at the university.

My life as a student was not easy. I became deeply involved in politics and I was just twenty-one when I took part in a plan to liberate Colombia in South America—a plan which was shattered by four hundred well-armed policemen in Bogota.

But the experience taught me a lot about the way the Communists operate. Communist students grabbed microphones at radio stations and shouted into them: "People of Colombia! The Leftist Revolution of America has started! Soldiers of Colombia! The army has joined us! You join us, too! The Leftist Revolution of America is triumphant!"

I saw how Communists tried to take over power during an uprising and I could not be sold on any of their promises.

Bogota was a hellish storm centre, but it was exciting. It was fun. I was a student in revolt against the old generation. I fought against the status quo. I was for democracy and real liberty for all of Latin America. I felt important.

I escaped arrest with the help of Cuba's Ambassador to Washington, Dr. Guillermo Belt, who put me on a cargo plane. My Odyssey had ended.

I, the law student, guerilla fighter and revolutionary, had not been able to liberate Bogota. For the first time I had lived without food or coffee and felt the paralysis of helplessness.

I also knew that dictatorship was no answer and that if someone wants real freedom, he has



I AM not a dictator, and I do not think I will become one. I will not maintain power with a machine-gun. Our revolution is still young. We are young men trying new ideas in a country that has been dominated by almost feudal traditions for the past four hundred years.

For the first time in centuries, the masses of Cubans—millions of them—feel that something is being done to raise their standards.

The hardest job is still ahead of me. I am not looking for great wealth, or the prestige that lavish living can bring. I was born in a family which was comfortably well off. My father was a successful sugar planter.

My own family stands to lose by our new agrarian reform programme. They own over

sort of national hero amnesty bill passed by public opinion, with free.

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Later they returned and burned her arms with hot irons, trying to force her to talk until finally, full of spite, they told Haydee: "You don't have a sweetheart any more because we have killed him, too."

And she imperterbably replied: "He is not dead, for to die for the Fatherland is to live."  
What do revolutionaries do in prison? They learn and study and plan the details of the future revolution which will succeed. I was no different.

There was an iron discipline in prison, but I organised a school for fellow political prisoners, where we developed undying loyalties and friendship.

Finally, Batista ordered that I was to be isolated from the rest. He had seen a report that we were singing songs, laughing and defying his regime.

I spent my time in solitary confinement memorising an English dictionary.

It was during this period that my wife's father became a Batista aide. And I was not surprised to hear that she had divorced me. . . . The people of Cuba did not forget those of us who were in prison. I suddenly became a sort of national hero. On May 13, 1955, an amnesty bill passed by Parliament and, backed by public opinion, was signed, and soon I was free.

Put the secret police still watched me day and night. I decided to leave Cuba and my brother Raul and I went to Mexico.

In Mexico City I met Colonel Alberto Bayo, who is one of the best soldiers I have ever known. He had fought in the Spanish Civil War and was well known as an expert in guerrilla fighting.

We became a people's movement. I visited peasants' huts with a simple statement: "I am Fidel Castro. My companions and I have come to liberate Cuba."

"Nobody has anything to fear from us, because we have come to help the farmer. We are going to give you land on which to work, markets for your products, schools for your sons, sanitary housing for your family. We need something to eat, but we are going to pay you for it."

When we arrived at the Sierra Maestra, we executed a ranch foreman who had accused tenant farmers and peasants of being pro-rebel, and who had increased the holdings of his land-lord from ten to four hundred acres by taking the land of those he denounced.

By executing him we won the affection of the peasants.

The government posted notices offering a \$100,000 reward for my head. But nothing stopped our movement.

By the end of 1958 our campaign was reaching its climax. I had promised my brother Ramon that he would have Christmas supper at his house at Marcane in northern Oriente.

Ramon had been saving a twenty-four pound turkey in his freezer for a year and he had vowed that he would not eat it without me.

Brother Raul was also invited, but could not make it.

I arrived at about ten o'clock at night on Christmas Eve, with members of my staff and my personal bodyguard.

Ramon's wife and children were there and so were my mother and sisters. As soon as the meal was over, Ramon and I left to continue the war.

On the afternoon of Boxing Day a lieutenant of Batista's air force flew an armed B-26 into Miami International airport instead of carrying out his bombing mission. The morale of Batista's armed forces was collapsing.

On December 31 I issued orders to my commanders to march on Santiago and attack the city on January 3. Santiago fell and Batista's troops were withdrawing, surrendering and fraternising.

Batista fled from Havana with suitcases filled with money. His Foreign Minister, Gonzalo Guell, joined him.

Cuba was without a government and without a dictator. And two hundred million dollars were missing.

We made history, but there will be no time to write the whole story of our struggle for



# FIDEL CASTRO

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# EL CASTRO

"I am a Cuban lawyer and I am only twenty-nine years old," I told Bayo, without wasting any time. "I want to fight with weapons in my hands against Batista. Please help me train my men."

"How many men do you have?" Bayo asked.

"Nobody yet," I admitted. "But I am going to the United States to get men and money."

"I will do it," Bayo replied, "but I'm afraid I don't have much faith in your possible success—a young man of only twenty-nine."

"I will be successful," I insisted.

Next morning I flew to Miami and New York and visited exiled friends, and I returned to Mexico City with money and recruits. Many of our friends followed us from Cuba.

On November 26, 1956, eighty-two of us set out to sea from Mexico by yacht. Six days later we landed on the shores of Cuba's Oriente province.

Batista's men were waiting for us. More than fifty of our friends were killed within the next few days, and seventeen were captured.

Only a dozen of us escaped death or capture. We made our way to the Sierra Maestra through deer-hunting trails which I remembered from my childhood, and this became the first beach-head of the Revolution.

Many of our friends found ways to buy and smuggle us arms. When these shipments came in I used to hand them to our new recruits with loving care.

Our friends in Havana gave us as much as \$50,000 each for arms and our own underground provided \$25,000 each month.

One sugar industrialist financed us with \$100,000. Venezuela raised some \$200,000 and companies operating in Eastern Cuba began to pay their taxes to us.

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We made history, but there will be no time to write the whole story of our struggle for many years. All I want to say now is that when Havana finally fell and Batista escaped to the dictators' heaven in Ciudad Trujillo I had expected a Waterloo. What happened was a Dunkirk.

What is going to happen in Cuba, now that we have rid ourselves of Batista's tyrannical regime? There is much to be done, especially in the field of social reform.

We have to help the 200,000 or 300,000 families who are farmers and who have no land of their own. Many of them come to Havana seeking jobs and they increase the number of unemployed people in the city.

How is it possible to give work to the people if the country is not industrialising?

We go to our towns and they ask for schools, hospitals, sewers, street paving, parks, markets and city waterworks of all kinds.

They want so much. I am making a census of their needs. I have asked the active citizens in each town to tell me what they need and in what order they would like the government to provide them. The money to pay for it all will come from investors in this country.

The capital for industries will be partly Cuban and partly foreign. We shall return it plus interest. It could come from England; it could come from France; it could come from Germany.

How do I feel about trading with the Soviet Union and other Communist countries?



I think that we should sell to them if they buy from us. Because what are we going to do if we have the products left and they want to buy them?

But I stand quite firm on Communism. There are no Communists in our government. I have never been a Communist and neither is my brother Raul.

World opinion criticised us for the executions we carried out after we won the revolution. But the men and women executed were criminals, and we gave them a fair trial.

I fight for the good of my people's, without any personal or egotistic ambition soiling my conduct.

I know history will absolve me and that I can serve my country in peace as much as in the fight against tyranny.

(As Told To Kurt Singer)