

Fidel Castro: The Legacy

By Steven Savery



Fidel Castro recently retired as Cuba's totalitarian ruler after more than 45 years in power, but as the country begins the post Fidel era, what will he be profoundly remembered for? What was his defining moment in history that secured his legacy as an iconic figure in the communist movement?

Fidel Castro was born on the 13th of August 1926 and became increasingly passionate about political affairs whilst studying law at the University of Havana, and was not shy in voicing his displeasure over the successful *coup d'état* by General Fulgencio Batista in 1952. Castro built his movement for change, which was known as the 26th July movement (named after the date of a failed attempt to overthrow General Batista's government), and in January of 1959, his army marched forth into Havana and successfully overthrew General Batista's 7 year reign on Cuba.

Castro's revolutionary regime began, and this was soon recognised by the United States. However, ties started to sever between the two countries after Cuba signed an agreement to buy oil from the former Soviet Union, which enraged US-owned refineries working within Cuba who soon stopped processing the oil. This was very beginning of what proved to be one of the defining and most notable point of Fidel's reign: The Cuban Missile Crisis.

After a failed attempt to overhaul Castro's government in 1961's famous Bay of Pigs incident, tensions heightened further between the United States and Cuba after a military deployment of nuclear missiles to Cuba by the USSR. Nikita Khrushchev, the USSR's communist leader at this time, was deemed to be justified in this response due to the deployment of US missiles to Turkey, which he viewed as a threat to his country. This brought Cuba into the very heart of the Cold War conflict between the world's two superpowers of the time, and almost bringing the world to nuclear war.

In the end, an agreement was met between John F Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev, but this, in my opinion, is what Fidel Castro will be remembered for. He was a freedom fighter, wanting Cuba to be independent of any American influence that was the case in the pre-Castro era. He fought for the people of Cuba, for their to be equality for all regardless of their social background. And although he provided free education and healthcare to the island, educating the young and helping the aged, he will always be remembered for his foreign policy and war of words with the United States as well as his communist beliefs.

PUBLISHED IN: - BRIG (UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING NEWSPAPER) – May 2008