

## Cuban Revolution Timeline

**August 1958** – Fidel Castro’s armies launched an attack on President Fulgencio Batista’s government, surrounding major cities and cutting off railways and supply lines.

**December 31, 1958** – Batista fled Havana, the capital of Cuba, and Castro took power. President Dwight Eisenhower recognized the new Cuban government soon after.

**April 1959** – Castro visited the United States and met with Vice President Richard Nixon. He was greeted by cheering crowds in many cities.

**May 1959** – Castro signed the Agrarian Reform Act, which banned foreign ownership of land in Cuba and limited landholdings to 1,000 acres. The government took over any amount over 1,000 acres owned by a single family or company, broke it up, and gave it to peasants or turned it into state-run communes.

**February 1960** – Cuba and the USSR agreed to begin trading sugar, oil, and grain.

**March 1960** – Eisenhower approved funding and training for a plan to overthrow Castro. He also approved an embargo of sugar, oil, and guns, banning Americans from trading these items with Cuba.

**July 1960** – Castro began nationalizing U.S. companies operating in Cuba.

**January 3, 1961** – The U.S. ended diplomatic relations with Cuba.

**January 20, 1961** – John F. Kennedy became president. He defeated Nixon, who had been Eisenhower’s Vice President. During the campaign, Kennedy accused Eisenhower and Nixon of not doing enough to stop Castro, asking in one campaign speech, “How did we permit the Communists to establish this foothold 90 miles away?”

**April 17, 1961** – A CIA-funded invasion of Cuba, known as the Bay of Pigs Invasion, was launched with the goal of overthrowing Castro. Castro’s army defeated the invasion within a few days.

## Document A: 1959 Interview (Modified)

*In February 1959, Castro was interviewed in Havana by members of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, an organization that represents the editors of U.S. newspapers. These are excerpts from the interview.*

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Question: Are the electoral laws going to be changed?

Answer: Of course, we will try to improve the system so that democracy will be here in politics. People used to buy votes, spend money, using power to win the election. We want to improve our electoral system.

Question: What is your opinion of the U.S. foreign policy towards Cuba since you came?

Answer: I am not an American citizen. I have no right to speak about the political situation. But if you ask me about Cuba, I think now it is not a bad policy. This time I think the U.S. government sent a good Ambassador. Everybody says he is a good Ambassador and I feel the attitude is not against us politically. Really the official policies as I think now and observe is of friendship.

Question: Can you estimate when the elections will be held?

Answer: Yes, in about two years. People want this.

Question: Do you have a plan to work with Eisenhower to solve any difficulties?

Answer: As you know there are some interests of a few people, that are a small percentage of the U.S. . . . But really there are no serious difficulties. . . . I do say we are a small country and a small people working here too much to solve our difficulties. The U.S. is a big country and big people working to solve the difficulties. . . . Then I am here in my place, working in my small country and working for my small people, and we want to be in friendship with all the countries of America. If President Eisenhower has time—and if I have time, too, I would gladly speak with him as I speak with you and as I speak the same with the most small citizen and the most big citizen of the U.S. I would gladly salute and shake hands.

**Source:** Fidel Castro, *Interview with U.S. Society of Editors, February 28, 1959.*

## Document B: 1961 Speech (Modified)

*Castro gave this speech in Havana, Cuba, on May 1, 1961. May 1<sup>st</sup> is International Workers' Day, a celebration of the working class promoted by labor advocates and leftists.*

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The Americans spoke of elections. What elections did they want? A revolution expressing the will of the people is an election everyday, not every four years; it is a constant meeting with the people, like this meeting. The old politicians could never have gathered as many votes as there are people here tonight to support the revolution.

If Mr. Kennedy does not like socialism, well we do not like imperialism! We do not like capitalism! We have as much right to protest over the existence of an imperialist-capitalist regime 90 miles from our coast as he feels he has to protest over the existence of a socialist regime 90 miles from his coast. We would not think of protesting over that, because that is the business of the people of the United States. It would be absurd for us to try to tell the people of the United States what system of government they must have.

Rights do not come from size. Right does not come from one country being bigger than another. That does not matter. We have only limited territory, a small nation, but our right is as respectable as that of any country, regardless of its size. It is absurd for Mr. Kennedy . . . to tell us what kind of government he wants us to have. It occurs to Mr. Kennedy to do that only because he does not have a clear concept of international law or **sovereignty**. Who had those ideas before Kennedy? Hitler and Mussolini!

We do not endanger the security of a single North American. We, making agrarian reform, people's ranches, houses, schools, literacy campaigns, building hospitals, sending doctors, giving scholarships, building factories, increasing the productive capacity of our country, creating public beaches, converting schools, and giving the people the right to a better future—we do not endanger a single U.S. family or a single U.S. citizen.

**Source:** Fidel Castro, *Speech in Havana, Cuba, on May 1, 1961.*

### **Vocabulary**

sovereignty: the authority of a state to govern itself

## Castro Documents Corroboration Chart

	Document A: 1959 Interview	Document B: 1961 Speech
<b>1) Sourcing:</b> Who was the audience of the document? How might the audience affect what Castro said?		
<b>2) Contextualization:</b> What was going on in Cuba at the time? How might this have affected what Castro said?		
<b>3) Contextualization:</b> What was going on in the U.S. at the time? How might this have affected what Castro said?		
<b>4) According to this document, how did Fidel Castro view the United States?</b>		

	<b>Document A: 1959 Interview</b>	<b>Document B: 1961 Speech</b>
<p><b>5)</b> Overall, do you think this is a credible document to help you answer the question, <i>How did Fidel Castro view the United States?</i></p> <p>(Explain your answer using sourcing and contextualization analysis.)</p>		