

Antônio de Castro Alves was born in Currálinho (now Castro Alves) in the coastal province of Bahia on March 14, 1847, the son of a doctor. After receiving the best secondary education available, Antônio entered law school. He had begun to compose poetry even earlier and wrote some of his most impressive poems while a student. A hunting accident led to the amputation of a foot, and he dropped out of school. After 9 months of wandering through the backwoods of Brazil, he settled to write in the city of Salvador. He died of tuberculosis there at the age of 24 on July 6, 1871. Only one book of his poems, *Espumas flutuantes* (1870), was published before his death, but others were issued posthumously.

Some of the poetry of Castro Alves suffers from the worst qualities of 19th-century sentimentalism. Its exaggerated rhetorical quality reflects the Brazilian penchant for oratory and declamation. But, if some of his worst poems are omitted and some of the others are edited, his work emerges as highly lyrical yet restrained by a disciplined form (for example, *O gondoleiro do amôr*). His images are often powerful and deeply moving, as in *Crepúsculo sertanejo*. And even the declamatory tendency of his poetry indicates the degree to which it was rooted in the social and historical context.

Like most romantics Castro Alves saw the drama of man's destiny as an eternal conflict between good and evil. Man is caught by the maladjustments of history, and it was in this way that Castro Alves approached the problem of human slavery. Sinister forces larger than the individual had produced this institution, but Promethean struggle could perhaps destroy it or at least redeem the individual crushed between the grinding forces that produced it.

When Castro Alves was in law school, the issue of slavery was foremost in the public eye. Although the problem was not resolved for many years, law dealing with that institution were being hotly debated. And it was into this discussion that Castro Alves threw himself. Perhaps his most frequently recited poem is *O navio negreiro*, an account of the African slave trade in epic proportions. In many of his other poems, for instance, in the collection *Vozes d' Africa* (1880; *Voices of Africa*), he pictured the African not only as a hero but also as a lover, a truly human figure. To be sure, Castro Alves did not escape his times: he endowed his Africans with "white" qualities, even altering their physiognomy. But by this very means he was able to persuade some whites that, indeed, Africans were like them in love, in sorrow, in anger, and in tenderness; therefore, why not in law?

Further Reading

There is no book on Castro Alves in English, although some attention is given to him by Samuel Putnam in *Marvelous Journey: A Survey of Four Centuries of Brazilian Writing* (1948). The major study in Portuguese is Eugênio Gomes, ed., *Castro Alves: Obra completa* (1960).

Additional Sources

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Fidel Castro Ruz

Fidel Castro Ruz (born 1926) was Cuban prime minister and first secretary of the Communist party of Cuba. A lawyer by training, Castro led the Cuban Revolution and transformed the island into the first Communist state in the Western Hemisphere.

Fidel Castro was born on Aug. 13, 1926, on his family's prosperous sugar plantation near Birán, Oriente Province. His father was an immigrant from Galicia, Spain. Castro studied in Jesuit schools in Oriente and in Havana, where one of his high school teachers, Father Armando Llorente, recalled him as "motivated, proud, different from the others. . . . Fidel had a desire to distinguish himself primarily in sports; he liked to win regardless of efforts; he was little interested in parties or socializing and seemed alienated from Cuban society."

Became Campus Activist

In 1945 Castro entered law school at the University of Havana, where student activism, violence, and gang fights were common occurrences. Protected by its autonomy, the university was a sanctuary for political agitators. Castro soon joined the activists and associated with one of the gangs, the Unión Insurreccional Revolucionaria. Although police suspected him of the murder of a rival student leader and other violent actions, nothing was proved. Castro acquired a reputation for personal ambition, forcefulness, and persuasive oratory. Yet he never became a prominent student leader. On several occasions he was defeated in student elections.

In 1947 Castro temporarily left the university in order to join in an expedition led by writer Juan Bosch to overthrow the government of Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo, but the coup was called off during the ocean voyage to Dominica. The 23-year-old Castro jumped into the shark-infested waters and swam to shore carrying a gun over his head.

The following year he participated in one of the most controversial episodes of his life, the *Bogotazo*—a series of riots in Bogotá, Colombia, following the assassination of Liberal party leader Jorge E. Gaitán. Castro, who was attending a student meeting in Bogotá supported by Argentine dictator Juan Perón that was timed to coincide with—and disrupt—the Ninth Inter-American Conference, was caught up in the violence that rocked Colombia after the assassination. Picking up a rifle from a nearby police station, he joined the mobs and roamed the streets, distributing anti-United States propaganda and inciting the populace to revolt. Enrique Ovarés, one of his student companions, denies that Castro was a Communist but claims that it was "a hysteric, ambitious, and uncontrollable Fidel who acted in those events." Pursued by Colombian authorities, the Cuban students sought asylum in the Cuban embassy and were later flown back to Havana, where Castro resumed his law studies at the University of Havana.



While still a student, Castro married Mirta Díaz-Balart, a philosophy student whose wealthy family had political ties to powerful Cuban military leader Fulgencio Batista. The couple would have one son, Fidelito, in 1949, but because Castro had no income with which to support his family, the marriage eventually ended.

At the university Castro was exposed to different ideologies. The authoritarian ideas of fascism and communism were widely discussed, but above all, the nationalistic program of Cuba's Ortodoxo party—economic independence, political liberty, social justice, and an end to corruption—captured the imagination of many students. The party's charismatic leader, Eduardo Chibás, became their idol, and Castro developed into his devoted follower, joining the Ortodoxo party in 1947. While he would graduate three years later and begin to practice law in Havana, his interest in the law soon gave way to his passion for politics.

Assumed Leadership of Revolution

Early in 1952, in preparation for upcoming elections scheduled for June, Castro began campaigning for a seat in congress as a replacement for Ortodoxo party leader Chibás, who had publicly killed himself the previous summer. However, elections were never held. On March 10 General Batista and a group of army conspirators overthrew the regime of Cuban president Carlos Prío Socarrás. For Castro, violence seemed the only way to oppose the military coup. He organized a group of followers and on July 26, 1953, attacked the Moncada military barracks in Oriente Province. Castro was captured, tried, and sentenced to 15

years in prison. During his trial he delivered a lengthy defense in what would become his most famous speech, *La historia me absolverá*, attacking Batista's regime and outlining his own political and economic ideas, most of them within the mainstream of Cuba's political tradition.

After being released by an amnesty in 1955, Castro was exiled to Mexico City, where he began organizing an expedition against Batista dubbed the 26th of July Movement. On Dec. 2, 1956, Castro, his brother Raul, and 80 other men landed in Oriente Province. After encounters with the army, in which all but 12 of his men were killed or captured, Castro fled to the Sierra Maestra, forming in these mountains a nucleus for a guerrilla operation.

At the same time, urban opposition to the militaristic Batista regime increased. An attack on the Presidential Palace on March 13, 1957, led by students and followers of deposed President Prío, nearly succeeded in killing Cuba's new dictator. By 1958 a movement of national revulsion against Batista had developed. Castro emerged as the undisputed leader of the anti-Batista opposition, and his guerrillas increased their control over rural areas. On April 9, 1958, Castro called a national strike, which was called off after Batista ordered strikers to be shot on sight, causing massive shootings. Finally, defections in the army precipitated the fall of the regime on December 31.

Revolution Changed Course

On Jan. 1, 1959, Castro and his July 26th movement assumed power, proclaimed a provisional government, and began public trials and executions of "criminals" of the Batista regime. On February 15 Castro replaced José Miró Cardona as prime minister and appointed his own brother commander of the armed forces. A powerful speaker and a charismatic leader, Castro began exerting an almost mystical hold over the Cuban masses. As previous revolutionaries had done, he lectured the Cubans on morality and public virtue. He also emphasized his commitment to democracy and social reform and promised to hold free elections. Denying that he was a Communist, Castro described his revolution as humanistic and promised his followers a nationalistic government that would respect private property and uphold Cuba's international obligations.

Attempting to consolidate his support inside Cuba, Castro introduced several reforms. He confiscated wealth "illegally" acquired by Batista's followers, substantially reduced residential rents, and passed an agrarian reform law that confiscated inherited property. Although the avowed purpose of this law was to develop a class of independent farmers, in reality the areas seized developed into state farms, with farmers becoming government employees. By the end of 1959 a radicalization of the revolution had begun to take place. Purges or defections of military leaders became common, and their replacement by more radical and oftentimes Communist militants was the norm. Newspapers critical of these new leaders were quickly silenced.

This internal trend toward a Communist agenda was reflected in foreign policy too. Castro accused the United States of harboring aggressive designs against the revolution. In February 1960 a Cuban-Soviet trade agreement was

signed, and soon after Cuba established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and most Communist countries. Several months later, when the three largest American oil refineries in Cuba refused to refine Soviet petroleum, Castro confiscated them. The United States retaliated by cutting the import quota on Cuba's sugar. Castro in turn nationalized other American properties, as well as many Cuban businesses. On Jan. 3, 1961, U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower broke relations with Cuba.

Declaration of a Socialist State

In April 1961 anti-Castro exiles, supported by the United States under the leadership of its newly elected president, John F. Kennedy, attempted an invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs. The failure of that invasion consolidated Castro's power, and the Cuban leader declared his regime to be socialist. Economic centralization increased. Private schools fell under government control and educational facilities increased. There was a nationwide literacy campaign. Sanitation and health improved with the establishment of rural hospitals and clinics. Confiscation of private property brought virtually all industrial and business enterprises under state control. Religious institutions were suppressed and clergymen expelled from the island.

In December 1961 Castro openly declared himself to be a Marxist Leninist. He merged all groups that had fought against Batista into the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations, changed it later into the United Party of the Socialist Revolution, and transformed it into the Communist Party of Cuba—the island's only ruling party—in 1965.

In foreign affairs Castro moved closer to the Soviet Union, although the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 severely strained Cuban-Soviet relations. Castro had allowed the U.S.S.R. to install within Cuba's borders medium-range nuclear missiles aimed at the United States, ostensibly for the defense of Cuba. When President Kennedy protested and negotiated the missiles' removal directly with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, Castro felt humiliated. Shortly thereafter, pro-Soviet Cuban Communists were eliminated from positions of power. By 1964 the Organization of American States had ended all diplomatic relations with Cuba, effectively isolating that country in South America and increasing its dependence on the U.S.S.R.

Until the end of 1964 Castro had attempted to maintain a position of neutrality in the Sino-Soviet dispute. But following the 1964 Havana Conference of pro-Soviet Latin American Communist parties, the Soviet Union pressured Castro into supporting its policies. Cuba's relations with China deteriorated, and early in 1966 Castro denounced the Peking regime. By supporting the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, he demonstrated his dependence on the Soviet Union as well as his determination to move closer to the Soviet camp.

Spread of the Revolution

Another source of conflict in Cuban-Soviet relations was Castro's determination to export his revolution. After the 1964 Havana Conference the Soviet Union was temporarily able to slow down Castro's support for armed struggle

in Latin America. But by 1966 Castro founded in Havana the Asia-Africa-Latin America People's Solidarity Organization to promote revolution on three continents. In July 1967 he formed the Latin American Solidarity Organization, specifically designed to foster violence in Latin America. Castro's efforts, however, were mostly unsuccessful, as evidenced by the failure of Che Guevara's guerrilla campaign in Bolivia in 1967. Nevertheless, Castro's efforts in this regard continued through the 1970s.

Repression Culminated in Boat Lift

Despite the improvements that he brought to Cuba—the country boasted a 94 percent literacy rate and an infant mortality rate of only 11 in 1,000 births in 1994—Castro was constantly condemned for human rights abuses. Political prisoners crowded Cuban jails, while homosexuals, intellectuals, political dissidents, and others were constant victims of government-sponsored violence. In 1989, perceiving him a threat, Castro authorized the execution of former friend General Arnaldo Ochoa Sanchez on trumped-up drug smuggling charges.

One of Castro's goals was to remove opposition to his rule, which he accomplished not only with executions and imprisonments, but through forced emigrations. The largest of these, the Mariel Boat Lift, occurred in response to a riot outside the Peruvian Embassy in Havana. In mid-April of 1980, Castro opened the port of Mariel to outsiders, particularly exiled Cubans living in Miami, FL., who sailed into port to claim their relatives. Taking advantage of the situation, Castro loaded boats with prison inmates, long-term psychiatric patients, and other social undesirables. During the government-directed exodus, over 120,000 Cubans left their homeland for sanctuary in the United States, causing a small crisis upon reaching Miami.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, Castro's revolution began to lose momentum. Without support from its Soviet allies, who had subsidized much of Cuba's economy via cheap petroleum and a large, ready market for the country's all-important sugar industry, unemployment and inflation both grew. In addition to adopting a quasi-free market economy, encouraging international investment in Cuba, and developing a tourist industry designed to draw foreign currency into his country, Castro began pressing the United States to lift the trade embargo it had imposed upon Cuba since the revolution. The U.S. government remained firm, however, refusing to negotiate with Cuba on trade matters until Castro ended his dictatorial regime. In 1994, the U.S. Congress even tightened the embargo. "This country can only be ruled by the revolution," Castro responded, according to *U.S. News & World Report*; he reaffirmed his determination to retain control by threatening further emigrations of Cubans to Miami. Still, U.S.-Cuban relations had begun to show signs of warming by the latter part of the 1990s: Castro visited the United States in 1996, and invited Cuban exiles then living in the United States to return to their homeland and start businesses. Resolute in his determination to preserve some form of socialism in his country, Castro prepared to groom a new generation of Cuban leaders while also effectively restoring stability to

the Cuban economy and regaining support among its people.

Further Reading

There is extensive literature on Castro. Herbert L. Matthews's sympathetic *Fidel Castro* (1969) contains valuable insights into Castro's personality. Jules Dubois, *Fidel Castro: Rebel—Liberator or Dictator?* (1959), has much information on Castro's early life and on his struggle against Batista. For the historical conditions of the events see Wyatt MacGaffey and Clifford R. Barnett, *Twentieth Century Cuba: The Background of the Castro Revolution* (1965); and Earle Rice, *The Cuban Revolution* (1995).

Other recommended titles on Castro include Marta Harnecker, *Fidel Castro's Political Strategy: From Moncada to Victory* (1987); Sebastian Balfour, *Castro* (1990; 2nd edition, 1995); Georgie Anne Geyer's *Guerilla Prince: The Untold Story of Fidel Castro* (1991); Robert E. Quirk's *Fidel Castro* (1993); Warren Brown, *Fidel Castro: Cuban Revolutionary* (1994); and Esther Selsdon, *The Life and Times of Fidel Castro* (1997). Recommended for background on the revolution are Robert Taber, *M-26: Biography of a Revolution* (1961); Theodore Draper, *Castroism: Theory and Practice* (1965) and *Castro's Revolution: Myths and Realities* (1962); Bruce D. Jackson, *Castro, the Kremlin, and Communism in Latin America* (1968); Jaimie Suchlicki, *University Students and Revolution in Cuba, 1920–1968* (1969); and Hugh Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom* (1971). See also Lee Lockwood, *Castro's Cuba, Cuba's Fidel: An American Journalist's Inside Look at Today's Cuba in Text and Picture* (1967; revised edition, 1990). □

engineer's love for two women, lacked emotional involvement.

In her poignant story of the prairie, *O Pioneers!* (1913), Cather at last discovered her subject matter. This tale of Alexandra Bergson, daughter of Swedish settlers, whose devotion to the land and to her tragically fated younger brother precludes her own chance for happiness, is a major novel and an important source for Cather's subsequent work. In *Song of the Lark* (1915) she presents the story of a young woman's attempt at artistic accomplishment in the constricting environment of small-town life. *My Antonia* (1918), generally considered her finest novel, is based on a successful city lawyer's reflections on his prairie boyhood and his love for Antonia Shimerda, a warm, vibrant Bohemian girl.

Cather's next novel, *One of Ours* (1922), about a man who goes to war in order to escape his midwestern farm environment, won the Pulitzer Prize. *A Lost Lady* (1923) depicts the conflict of a cultivated and sensitive young woman with the crass materialism of the post-pioneer period, and *The Professor's House* (1925) is a study of the problems of youth and middle age. These three novels differ from Cather's earlier studies of prairie life in that the midwestern atmosphere is used as a force in opposition to the artistic aspiration and intellectual development of the gifted inhabitants.

With the passing of the frontier and its ugly transformation into "Gopher Prairie," Cather permanently left the Midwest, both literally and as a thematic vehicle for her novels. She lived intermittently in New York and Europe until the

Willa Sibert Cather

The American author Willa Sibert Cather (1873–1947) is distinguished for her strong and sensitive evocations of prairie life in the twilight years of the midwestern frontier. Her poetic sensibility was in sharp contrast to the naturalistic and Freudian-influenced literary movements of her time.

Willa Cather was born in Winchester, Va., but at the age of 9 moved to Nebraska, where her father had bought a farm. Her immediate response to the stark grandeur of the prairie and her involvement in the life of the Bohemian and Scandinavian immigrants provided her with both the material and an unadorned manner of expression for her novels. Although she was educated largely by her mother, her knowledge of English literature and Latin was sufficient for her to do excellent work at the University of Nebraska. Leaving the prairie for the first time in 1900, she moved to Pittsburgh and found employment as editor, drama critic, and high school teacher.

In 1903 Cather published a collection of poems, *April Twilights*, and in 1905 a collection of short stories, *The Troll Garden*, neither of which indicated her considerable talent. Her first novel, *Alexander's Bridge* (1912), the story of an

