Abstract:

Much of the scholarship on the development of the Cuban Revolution has focused on its relationship to Cold War tensions or the two most prominent figures of the revolution, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. These two figures did indeed have the most power and influence over the course of the revolution, but the Cuban Revolution was not solely influenced and shaped by these two influential figures. Both during and after Castro’s take over, there were prominent and influential secondary figures that played a significant role in the guerrilla campaign waged by the 26th of July Movement, the subsequent takeover of the government, and the policies of the revolutionary regime in Cuba. Figures such as Carlos Franqui, Haydee Santamaria, Camilo Cienfuegos, and Celia Sanchez among others held significant influence at different stages of the revolution. These secondary figures came from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds and had diverse influences and ideologies, yet were brought together for a common struggle. These secondary figures each had a different outcome as a result of their involvement in the revolution; some stayed close to the regime until death, others went into exile. This research looks to shed light on the similarities and differences of the Cuban revolutionaries and how that impacted them and the outcomes and trajectory of the Cuban Revolution itself. Although these secondary figures came together for a common cause, it was their differences that influenced their relationship to the Castro regime and their experience in revolutionary Cuba.
Much of the scholarship on the development of the Cuban Revolution has focused on its relationship to Cold War tensions between the United States or the two most prominent figures of the revolution, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. These two figures did indeed have the most power and influence over the course of the revolution, but the Cuban Revolution was not solely influenced and shaped by these two influential figures. Both during and after Castro’s take over, there were prominent and influential secondary figures that played a significant role in the guerrilla campaign waged by the 26th of July Movement, the subsequent takeover of the government, and the policies of the revolutionary regime in Cuba. Figures such as Carlos Franqui, Haydee Santamaria, Camilo Cienfuegos, and Celia Sanchez among others held significant influence at different stages of the revolution. These secondary figures came from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds and had diverse influences and ideologies, yet were brought together for a common struggle. These secondary figures each had a different outcome as a result of their involvement in the revolution; some stayed close to the regime until death, others went into exile. This research looks to shed light on the similarities and differences of the Cuban revolutionaries and how that impacted them and the outcomes and trajectory of the Cuban Revolution itself. Although these secondary figures came together for a common cause, it was their differences that influenced their relationship to the Castro regime and their experience in revolutionary Cuba.

These secondary figures came from varied backgrounds, challenging the long-held belief among historians that revolutionaries largely come from the middling classes. Crane Brinton argued in his seminal work that revolutionaries do not come from the dregs of society, instead claiming that revolutionaries come from the upper classes of society.¹ This long-held belief is

directly challenged by the makeup of the secondary figures of the Cuban revolution. These figures varied in social standing, education attainment levels, and upbringing. Furthermore, the revolutionaries studied in this paper are not mere “rank and file” soldiers. Although they fought alongside the Castro brothers and Che Guevara during the guerrilla campaign, these figures had a tremendous influence on the course the revolution would take. This influence manifested itself in ways that, while not at the highest levels of Cuban decision making, played an important role in the way the revolution was implemented on ground level. All of these figures, especially at the outset of the guerrilla campaign, held tremendous influence. They had Fidel and Che’s ear during decision-making time. Once the revolution took hold of Cuban government, the secondary figures (with the exception of Camilo Cienfuegos) were took positions in different official capacities. Their official role was to push forward the agenda of the Cuban revolution, but, through these official capacities, these revolutionaries were able to carve out their unique visions for the revolution and put it into practice in subtle ways. These revolutionary figures all came together in a common cause against the Bautista regime, but they arrived at this point after varied experiences that cultivated in each of them unique perspectives on what the Cuban Revolution could, and should, be.

**Haydée Santamaria**

Born in a provincial town in rural Cuba, Haydée Santamaria became a heroine of the Cuban Revolution. She was one of only two women—the other being Celia Sanchez—that were involved in the revolution in each of its phases. She fought on the front lines of the failed 1953 attack on the Moncada military barracks and showed great resilience when she was captured and interrogated by Cuban forces. Later, during the guerrilla campaign she was a military and
intellectual leader. Although she had never left the country, she mustered up the courage to travel to the United States to secure financing and weapons from mafia thugs.\(^2\) After the 26\(^{\text{th}}\) of July Movement won the revolutionary war, Haydée founded the Casa de las Americas, a publishing house that would be a intellectual, cultural, and literary hotspot for Cuba and Latin America. Despite only achieving a sixth grade education, she was pivotal in developing this cultural space for the people of Latin America. It was through this publishing house that Haydée was able to achieve her vision of the revolution. She believed, as many other revolutionaries in Cuba did, that the Cuban Revolution was a beacon for the rest of the third world. As such she used this publishing house to spread this message throughout the third world. Most importantly she allowed writers and artists who held slightly dissenting opinions to publish works and make their voice known. Through this cause she was able to make sure that the dominant voice of the revolution—the official narrative—was not the only voice that was heard.

**Carlos Franqui**

Perhaps the most fascinating secondary figure of the Cuban Revolution was Carlos Franqui. Another figure who came from rural Cuba, Franqui grew to become a compassionate person. He credits this to his early education by a black school teacher he had. Once he came of age, Franqui joined the communist party. He soon found, however, that his views did not align with the communists as much as he thought they would. He described himself as a democratic socialist. As such he left the communist party. Soon, he found himself joining the guerrilla campaign in the Sierra Maestra as the head of the revolutionary newspaper, *Revolucion*. He was also the head of propaganda, a role through which he would influence key speeches and press

releases for the regime up until his self imposed exile in 1967. He fled the country in 1967. Historians still debate what the biggest reason for his departure from Cuba was. Franqui himself cited Fidel’s support for the Soviet Union’s invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1967, but other sources suggest that it was because of his fear that Fidel was slowly acting towards his assassination. In exile, Franquii became a vocal critic of the revolution, arguing that the revolution is lost.
Bibliography


