

History of Cuba and Events in the Life of Carlos Eire



1933 September: “Sergeants’ Revolt,” organized by Fulgencio Batista ends the rule of Carlos Manuel de Céspedes and begins a period of democratic, albeit sometimes corrupt, rule.

1940 October: Batista is elected president and rules until 1944, when he is constitutionally obligated to step down.

1952 March: Former president Batista, supported by the army, seizes power.

1953 July: Fidel Castro launches an unsuccessful attack on Batista’s armed forces. After being imprisoned for almost 2 years, he is pardoned and released, and flees to Mexico.

1956 November: Fidel Castro, with some 80 insurgents including Raúl Castro, Che Guevara, and Camilo Cienfuegos, sets sail from Mexico for Cuba.

1957 March: Student leader José Echevarría and a small group take over a radio station in Havana. Echevarría is killed while retreating to the university. In a simultaneous attack on the presidential palace, 35 rebels and 5 palace guards are killed. *Carlos is in first grade with one of Batista’s children. (p. 33)

1958 May: Batista sends an army of 10,000 into the Sierra Maestra to destroy Castro’s 300 armed guerrillas, and thousands more to the Escambray to take on the guerrillas led by Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo. By August, both rebel groups have defeated the army’s advance and captured a huge amount of arms.

1958 December: Castro and the other rebels capture several towns in eastern and central Cuba. *Carlos celebrates Nochebuena with his family, interrupted by a stranger asking to use the telephone. (p. 182–192)

1959 January: President Batista resigns and flees the country on the same day that Fidel Castro’s column enters Santiago de Cuba. Four days later, Manuel Urrutia is named President of Cuba. *Carlos’ story begins. (p. 2) Carlos attends Castro’s “triumphal parade” and watches his speech on television. (p. 212)

1959 January: Summary trials and executions by firing squads begin immediately. By the end of the year, nearly 1,000 Cubans are assassinated. Che Guevara takes charge of the executions. *Carlos witnesses much of this on his television. (p. 218–219).

1959 February: Fidel Castro becomes Premier of Cuba.

1959 March: Castro confronts racism in a speech in Havana and makes racial prejudice a punishable offense.

1959 May: The Cuban government enacts the Agrarian Reform Law which limits land ownership to 1,000 acres and expropriates all other land. *Carlos “sells out” and draws a poster in favor of the Reform Law. (p. 231)

1959 July: Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado becomes President of Cuba, replacing Manuel Urrutia who resigns over disagreements with Fidel Castro.

1959 October: Other revolutionary leaders such as Huber Matos and Camilo Cienfuegos are imprisoned or simply disappear without a trace.

1960 February: Soviet Deputy Prime Minister Anastas Mikoyan visits Havana, sets up a trade agreement between Cuba and the U.S.S.R.

1960 March: The freighter, La Coubre, a 4,310-ton French vessel carrying 76 tons of Belgian munitions, explodes while it is being unloaded in Havana harbor. *Carlos’s cousins Fernando and Miguelito are “involved with the people who blew up that ship.” (p. 234)

1960 March: Radio stations are seized by the Revolutionary government. Freedom of expression on the airwaves is stifled.

1960 March: U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower orders CIA director Allen Dulles to train Cuban exiles for a covert invasion of Cuba.

1960 May: All newspapers are seized by the Revolutionary government and the already limited freedom of press and speech is virtually abolished.

1960 June: Anti-Castro guerrillas take up arms in the mountains of central and eastern Cuba. Castro fights back, beginning the Escambray Revolt, or the War Against the Bandits.

1960 June: The exodus of middle and lower class Cubans begins in earnest. *Carlos’ classmates begin to disappear, leaving Cuba, and Carlos and his brother switch schools. (p. 237)

1960 July: All U.S. businesses and commercial property in Cuba are nationalized at the direction of the Cuban government. The nationalization is complete by the end of October. *During the nationalization process, Carlos sees his family lose all of their savings. (p. 272–274)

1960 September: Fidel Castro visits the U.S. and embraces Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev at the United Nations.

1960 September: Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs) are established throughout Cuba. Close surveillance of all citizens begins. *Carlos' new neighbors run one of these spy houses. (p. 269)

1960 October: Cuban-owned private enterprises are nationalized and all rental properties seized, along with commercial bank accounts. Abolition of private property and free enterprise begins.

1960 October: U.S. imposes embargo prohibiting all exports to Cuba except foodstuffs and medical supplies.

1960 December: *Carlos' mother hears rumors that children will be taken from parents who are deemed "counterrevolutionary" and decides that her children should leave Cuba as soon as possible. (p. 270)

1960 December: Operation Peter Pan (Operación Pedro Pan), an operation transporting 14,000 children of parents opposed to the new government, begins. The airlift continues for 22 months until October 1962 when the U.S. closes airports during the Cuban Missile Crisis. *Carlos is airlifted out in this operation in 1962.

1961: Castro proclaims this year the Year of Education (Año de la Educación) and the Year of Literacy (Año de la Alfabetización). Accordingly, efforts are made to increase literacy in the countryside, improve teacher quality, and implement other educational reforms.

1961 January: The U.S. breaks off official diplomatic relations with Cuba.

1961 April: An association called the Pioneers is established. The organization is a youth Communist group, which is praised for its promotion of environmental responsibility, literacy, and other community value, but is also construed as a youth arm of Castro's forces. *Carlos refuses to join and heckles the Pioneers who march on his street. (p. 269)

1961 April: Bay of Pigs: The United States-planned and funded attempted invasion by armed Cuban exiles in

southwest Cuba fails. Thousands of Cubans are arrested and imprisoned. *Including Carlos' uncle Filo. (p. 285-293)

1961 May: Private schools are seized and education is nationalized.

1961 August: Currency is changed. All personal bank accounts are seized by the government. *Carlos stands in line to change a few bills. (p. 272–274)

1961 September: Outdoor religious processions are suppressed and hundreds of clergy expelled. *Carlos marvels at the destruction of religious symbols. (p. 271)

1961 December: Castro openly declares himself a longtime "Marxist-Leninist."

1962 April: *Carlos and his brother Tony leave Cuba and arrive in the United States. (p. 374–387)

1962 August-October: Cuban Missile Crisis. President Kennedy is informed of the presence of surface-to-air missile batteries in Cuba. In October, the U.S. establishes air and sea blockades in response. The U.S. also threatens to invade Cuba if the missile bases are not dismantled and warns that a nuclear attack launched from Cuba would be considered a Soviet attack requiring full retaliation.

1962 October: Khrushchev agrees to remove nuclear weapons from Cuba and the U.S. agrees to remove missiles from Turkey and promises not to invade Cuba.

1962 November: U.S. ends Cuban blockade satisfied that all bases are gone and Soviet jets will leave the island by December 20.

1962 November: Emigration from Cuba is halted by the Revolutionary regime. The parents of over 10,000 Pedro Pan children are trapped in Cuba. *Carlos' mother risks her life searching for a way out. (p. 307)

1965 November: Immigration to U.S. reinstated. Parents begin to reunite with Pedro Pan children. *Carlos and Tony meet up with their mother in Chicago. (p. 195)

1967 October: Che Guevara is executed in La Higuera, Bolivia.

1975 November: Cuba sends troops to Angola, beginning a decade of revolutionary involvement in African wars.

1976: Universal free healthcare is enshrined in the Cuban Constitution in Article 50. The Cuban government's healthcare initiatives lead international organizations

such as the World Health Organization to praise them as leaders in the field.

1976 September: *Carlos' father dies in Havana. (p. 221)
1976 December: Fidel Castro assumes the title of President of the State Council, and becomes Head of State, Head of Government, and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces.

1979 January: Cuban exiles are permitted to visit their families in Cuba. More than 100,000 do so that year. *Including Carlos' mother. (p. 51)

1980 April: Mariel Boat Lift: Cuban Government announces that anyone wishing to leave Cuba may depart by boat from Mariel Port, prompting an exodus of up to 125,000 people to the U.S.

1991 December: The Soviet Union collapses, ending economic subsidies to Cuba worth approximately \$6 billion annually. Soviet troops leave Cuba.

1996 February: Cuban authorities arrest or detain at least 150 dissidents, marking the most widespread crackdown on opposition groups in the country since the 1970s.

1998 January: Pope John Paul II becomes the first Pope to visit the island.

1999 November: Christian activist Oscar Elías Biscet is detained by Cuban police for organizing meetings in Havana and Matanzas. He is released in 2002 thanks to pressure from human rights groups, but is arrested once again along with 75 other dissidents in 2003.

1999 November: 6-year-old Elián González is found in the Straits of Florida, clinging to an inner tube. *The Cuban government's insistence that Elián be reunited with his father prompts Eire to write his memoir.

2000 April-August: *Carlos writes *Waiting for Snow in Havana*.

2003 April: Cuban government arrests 78 writers, dissidents, and librarians. All are declared guilty of treason and sentenced to varying lengths of imprisonment. Books from several independent libraries are confiscated or destroyed.

2003 November: **Waiting for Snow in Havana* wins the National Book Award; it is condemned and banned by authorities in Havana.

2008 February: Raúl Castro takes over as president, days after Fidel announces his retirement.

2010 February: Political prisoner Orlando Zapata Tamayo dies after 85 days on hunger strike.

2010 July: President Castro agrees to free 52 dissidents under a deal brokered by the Church and Spain. Several go into exile.

2010 November: *Carlos Eire's second memoir, *Learning to Die in Miami: Confessions of a Refugee Boy*, is published by Free Press.

2011 January: US President Barack Obama relaxes restrictions on travel to Cuba.

2011 March: Last two political prisoners detained during 2003 crackdown are released.

2011 November: Cuba passes law allowing individuals to buy and sell private property for first time in 50 years.

2011 December: The authorities release 2,500 prisoners, including some convicted of political crimes, as part of an amnesty ahead of a papal visit.

2012 March: Pope Benedict visits, criticizing the US trade embargo on Cuba and calling for greater rights on the island.

2013 February: The National Assembly re-elects Raúl Castro as president.

2015 July: Cuba and US reopen their foreign embassies in each other's capitals, officially restoring diplomatic relations after more than 50 years.

2016 March: US President Barack Obama visits Cuba to meet with President Raúl Castro. The first visit by a sitting US president in almost 90 years.



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