

Introduction to the Cuban Revolution

Unit II: The Cuban Revolution

Objectives for the Week

- **1) Review** the definition of revolution that came out of the Mexican Revolution (1910).
- **2) Introduce** the Cuban Revolution in the Context of the Cold War, the Batista Dictatorship, and the writing of Haydée Santamaría, and Che Guevara.
- **3) Discuss and analyze** in context the ways in which Santamaría and Guevara engage with memory as personal and historical process.

The Cuban Revolution (Day 1)

Warm-up: The Finale and Questions to Consider

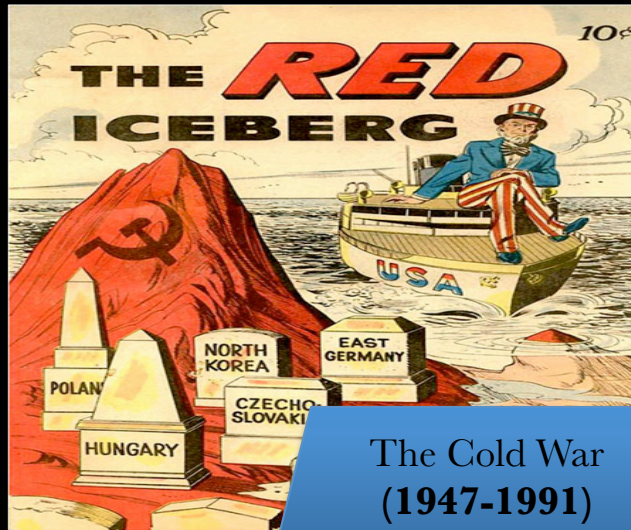
- *The last five minutes of La cucaracha (The Cockroach)*
- 1) What are the different points of view on the revolution expressed in the movie and how do these come out during the battle scene?
- 2) Are these same views on revolution the ones that came out in our discussion of *Cartucho*?
- 3) In what way does Villa have a presence (in his absence) in the film?

The Cuban Revolution (1959) and its participants



Precursors to the Cuban Revolution: What do you know?

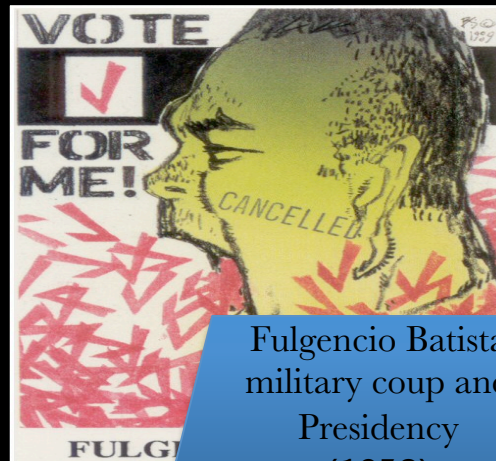
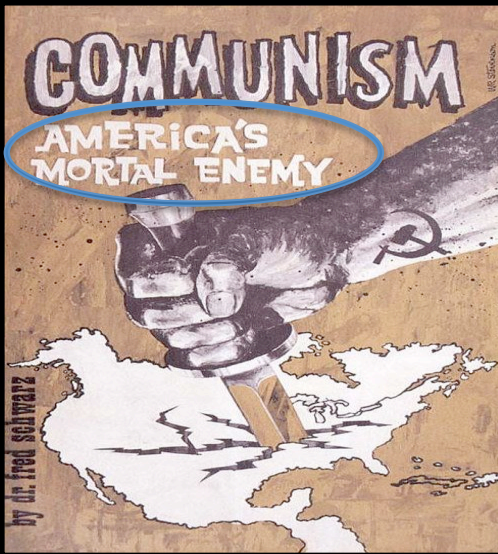
Look at the propaganda and see if you can figure out what some of the important precursors to the Cuban Revolution were.



The Cold War
(1947-1991)



July 26th
Movement
(1953)
Official Start of
the Revolution



Fulgencio Batista
military coup and
Presidency
(1952)



El viaje del Granma
(1956)

Need a quick refresher? Click [here](#) after class.

The Cuban Revolution (1959)



Primary Participants

- Fidel and Raúl Castro
- Ernesto “Che” Guevara**
- Camilo Cienfuegos
- Haydée Santamaría**
- Celia Sánchez
- Melba Hernández

Primary Goals

Overthrow Batista

Agrarian Reform

Revision of Educational
System

New government, *new man*

Haydée Santamaría

(1923-1980)

Haydée



During the Revolution

- Participant in the 1953 attack on the Moncada Barracks
- During that event, she was captured and tortured, but maintained silence
- Messenger; smuggled *History Will Absolve Me* (Castro, 1953) out of prison

Post-Revolution

- Minister of Education
- Founder: *Casa de las Américas* publishing house
- Suicide (1980)

Maclean, Betsy. *Haydée Santamaría: Rebel Lives*. New York, NY. Ocean Press, 2003.

Haydée's "goodbye" to Che

“14 years ago I witnessed the death of human beings so immensely loved that today I feel tired of living; I think I have lived too much already. I do not see the sub as so beautiful, I do not feel pleasure in seeing the palm trees. Sometimes, like now, despite enjoying life so much and realizing that it is worthwhile to open one's eyes every morning if only for those two things, I feel like keeping them closed, like you”
(Maclean 2).

“Haydée Remembers Moncada”

- Santamaría’s memory of the Moncada Attack

Attack on Batista’s
military barracks



Resulted in **Disaster**
for the Rebels



Fidel (captured)
Abel Santamaría
(captured, tortured,
killed)
**Boris Luis Santa
Coloma**
(captured, tortured,
killed)

Haydée, on memory...

- “Melba [Hernández] is the one who remembers everything with the greatest accuracy. I no longer remember precise times, and maybe she doesn’t either, after so many things and so many years. But before, when we got around to talking of those times, she found it easier to recall events in detail. If I start to talk and keep talking about the Moncada [attack in 1953], I’m sure I will remember many things” (13).

What did we learn today?

- Revolution in Mexico: varied definitions = factions
- The Cuban Revolution: emerges in precise moment of the Cold War
- First action: unsuccessful attack on the Moncada Barracks
- Haydée Santamaría: remembering disaster = time lapse, personal/political memory
- For next class: Read Haydée's "Goodbye to Che" and think about how these topics come into play for her there.

The Cuban Revolution

Day 2: “Haydée’s Goodbye to Che”
and Introduction to Che Guevara

Warm-up: Quote analysis Activity

- Each group will have a short quote from Haydée's account of the Moncada attack.
- Read the quote aloud, and then discuss the following in your small groups:
- **What theme(s) appear in your quote? How does it help us to interpret (or divert us from) Haydée's memory of the revolution?**
- Then, we'll talk about them each together.
- You have five minutes to discuss in small groups and then we will share our thoughts as a class!

Fidel

- **Groups 1 and 2**: “Every time I see Fidel speak with him, hear him on television, I think of the other boys, all those who died and all of those who are still alive, and I think of Fidel, the Fidel we knew back then and the Fidel who is still the same today. I think of the revolution that is still the same one we took to the Moncada” (13).

Melba

- **Groups 3 and 4**: “I remember Melba trying to protect me; me trying to protect her and both of us trying to protect each other, in everything we did, whenever other lives were in danger. Anything could’ve happened under the bullets, under the bursts of the machine guns, among the cries of pain of those who fell wounded, among the last moans of those who were dying” (14).

To remember/To forget

- **Groups 5 and 6**: “These are the facts that Melba recalls exactly. Those that I have tried unsuccessfully to forget. Those that I remember are enveloped in a cloud of blood and smoke [...] Death mowing down the boys that we loved so much, death staining the walls and the grass with blood. Death dominating everything, conquering everything. Death imposing itself like a necessity. And the fear of living after so many deaths and the fear of dying before those who had to die had died and the fear of dying when life could still win the final battle over death” (16).

Literary Language

Synesthesia: a confusion of the senses for effect or emphasis

- **Groups 7 and 8**: “I saw a man approach me and I heard a voice say: “They have killed your brother.” **I felt Melba’s hands.** I felt again the noise of the lead riddling my memory. I felt that I spoke without recognizing my own voice: “Was it Abel?” [...] the man did not reply. Elba moved close to me. All of Melba was in those hands that accompanied me” (17).

Synecdoque: when part of something is taken to represent the whole (Melba’s hands – Melba)

Fidel/the Revolution

- **Groups 9 and 10**: “These are the facts that are fixed in my memory. I don’t remember anything else with precision, but from that moment on, I never thought about anyone else but Fidel. We were all thinking of Fidel. We were thinking of a Fidel who couldn’t die. A Fidel who had to be alive to make the revolution. The life of Fidel contained within it the life of us all. If Fidel was alive, Abel and Boris and Renato and the rest had not died, they would be alive in Fidel – who was going to make the Cuban Revolution and who was going to restore their destiny to the people of Cuba” (17).

Fidel = the Revolution

Conclusions and Anticipations

- What are the main characteristics of Haydée's writing style?
- Does writing help her to remember the disaster in the Moncada Barracks or block her personal history even further?

Anticipating Che

- The next author we will read is Ernesto “Che” Guevara.
- What do you know about Che?
- Che’s book is titled *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War*. He also writes about the Cuban Revolution, but rather than write about its disastrous beginning, he chooses to write about the path to success.
- How do you think Che will remember the Cuban Revolution?
- Do you think his account will be optimistic? Do you anticipate any differences between his and Haydée’s writing style?

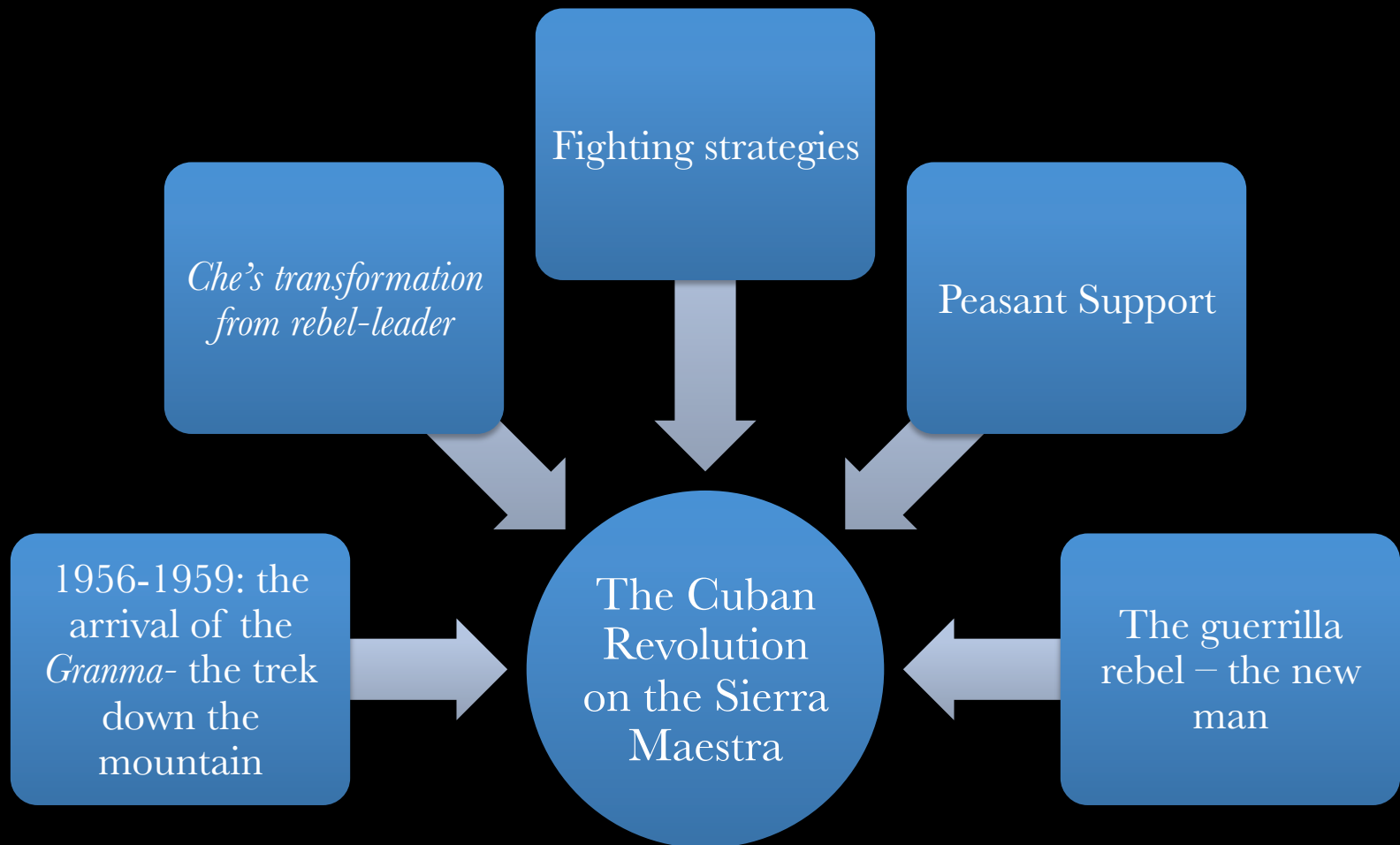
Before our next class

- **Read carefully the following chapters from *Reminiscences*:**
 - **“Prologue”**
 - “El Patojo”
 - “Alegría de Pío”

The Cuban Revolution

Day 3: Che Guevara's *Reminiscences*

Reminiscences (1963)



Warm-up: Che and Haydée

- For today's warm-up, we will do a survey through Kahoot on the your first impressions of the differences between Che's and Haydée's recollection of the Cuban Revolution and its failures and successes.
- Go to Kahoot.it
- Put the PIN in
- Choose a nickname
- Let's play!
- <https://create.kahoot.it/details/writing-the-revolution/1bc168f2-8a0a-4551-bb2f-a15f5100a970>

Prologue: A word from our author

[https://
www.thepubliceditor.com/
tag/che-guevara/](https://www.thepubliceditor.com/tag/che-guevara/)

Chattanooga Times Free Press Bennett



- Why does Che write *Reminiscences*, according to his “Prologue”?
- Who are his “ideal readers” and how does he present himself to them (us)?
- What does he request that other participants in the Revolution to do and why?

El “Patojo”: the Mirror Image of Che?

- There is a discrepancy in the placement of this chapter within *Reminiscences* among the different editions.
 - In the Spanish version, it is the final chapter.
 - In the English one, it is the first one.
 - Is this important? Why or why not?
-
- A dreamer (31).
 - A Foreigner (31).
 - A photographer (32)
 - A restless spirit (31-33)
 - A guerrilla rebel without military training (33)

The “Essence” of Che’s model of *Guerrilla Warfare* and Other Teachings

- “El Patojo had had no military training; he simply felt that duty called him. He was going to his country to fight, gun in hand, somehow to reproduce our guerrilla struggle. It was then that we had one of our few long talks. I limited myself to recommending strongly these three things: **constant movement, absolute mistrust, and eternal vigilance**” (33).
- “Why did he not learn from the experience of others? Why did those men not need more carefully the simple advice which was given? We still do not know exactly what happened, but we do know that the region was poorly chosen, that the men were not physically prepared, that they were not mistrustful enough and, of course, that they were not vigilant enough” (34).
- “Once again young blood has fertilized the fields of America, to make freedom possible. Another battle has been lost; we must make time to weep for our fallen comrades while we sharpen our machetes. From the valuable and tragic experience of the cherished dead, we must firmly resolve not to repeat their errors, to avenge the death of each one of them with many victories, and to bring about total liberation” (34).
- Ironically, Che’s life ended because he made the same mistakes.

Discussion Leaders

- “Alegría de Pío”

Before next class

- For next class, you will read these two chapters of Che's *Reminiscences*:
 - “The Reinforcements”
 - “Morale and Discipline”
- While you're reading, think about the rhetorical devices Che uses as well as the literary and testimonial characteristics of this particular text.
- **ConnectCast**: Don't forget the follow-up *ConnectCast* for our online discussion! – You will have until next Wednesday to post your response via audio or video or in writing.