

Castro Ruz, Fidel (2005). History will absolve me

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The work is Fidel Castro's self-defense plea before the trial against him that began on October 16, 1953 for the assaults on the Moncada and Carlos Manuel de Céspedes barracks, in Santiago de Cuba and Bayamo, respectively, which took place on July 26, 1953. Faced with this trial, Fidel, then a graduate in Civil Law, decided to assume his own defense, which later became a book.

The publishing house of the book is the Publications Office of the Council of State, the edition and notes are by Pedro Álvarez Tabío and Guillermo Alonso Fiel.

The scope of the annotation work done for this edition far exceeds anything that has gone before, giving it a qualitatively novel character.

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The document

In the document, Fidel points out what he considers the ills of Cuba at that time, summarized in six fundamental problems: the land problem, the industrialization problem, the housing problem, the unemployment problem, the education problem and the health problem.

Among the main issues he highlighted:

- 85% of Cuba's small farmers paid rent and suffered the perennial threat of eviction when more than half of the best land was held by foreign companies and a large proportion of the population was illiterate.

- 400,000 rural and urban families lived in overcrowded conditions and almost two and a half million of the urban population paid high rents for the houses they occupied.

- Ninety percent of rural children were devoured by parasites. The existence of more than one million unemployed.

The trial

Those accused of participating in the events of July 26, 1953 were tried in Case No. 37 of that year, which began on Monday, September 21. The Santiago Palace of Justice was the venue of a trial never seen before. To the astonishment of the court and others present, the defendants became accusers.

At the end of the judicial process, on October 6, 29 of the 102 defendants were sentenced to between seven months and thirteen years in prison. Seven days later they were transferred to the Model Prison of Isla de Pinos. Fidel Castro had been kept away from the court since the end of the first session. His trial took place on October 16 in a small room of the Saturnino Lora Civil Hospital. Abelardo Crespo, lying on a bed due to the multiple wounds received, and Gerardo Poll Cabrera were tried together with the leader of the group.

As in the previous trial, the defendants became accusers, denouncing the crimes committed against their comrades. It was at that moment when one of the most shocking myths of the assault on the Moncada Barracks began to take shape. There were few people present when Fidel Castro stood up to assume his own defense.

The trial lasted approximately four hours, half of which Fidel spent denouncing the coup d'état, the crimes against his comrades, his government program if he had triumphed and other considerations of national interest. In the end, he was sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment.

The plea of his defense begins:

"Your Honors, magistrates: never has a lawyer had to practice his profession under such difficult conditions; never against a defendant had such an accumulation of overwhelming irregularities been committed. One and the other are in this case one and the same person. As a lawyer, he has not even been able to see the case file and, as a defendant, he has been locked up today for seventy-six days in a solitary cell, totally and absolutely incommunicado, beyond all human and legal prescriptions". (p.23).

Prison

Facsimile of the inside and outside cover of the original *La historia me absolverá* published in 1954.

When arriving at the prison, the leader of the Centennial Generation (because 1953 coincided with the centennial of José Martí's birth), elaborated a work plan centered on propaganda.

In a letter to Melba Hernandez dated April 17, 1954, he says to her:

...propaganda cannot be abandoned for a minute because it is the soul of every struggle.

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must have its own style and adjust to the circumstances.

Then he tells him that his wife Mirtha will talk to him about a pamphlet of decisive importance because of its ideological content and its tremendous accusations and asks him to pay the greatest interest to it. He was referring to *La Historia me absolverá*. It was written in prison between his arrival in October 1953 and April

1954, with the help of a personal library that, two months after entering the prison, had about 300 volumes.

From that leaflet, which would become the most valuable propaganda medium because of its impact on the population, he tells them to distribute one hundred thousand within four months throughout the island. Although the actual distribution only reached one tenth of that figure, the leaflet was a total victory. The leaflet was not circulated until a year after the trial, in October 1954.

Political Program

This document immediately became the political program of the new stage of struggle that had begun with the assault on the Moncada and Carlos Manuel de Céspedes barracks.

It denounces the shady handling of the judicial process, including even the attempts to assassinate him and in the end to separate him from his comrades and give him a private trial.

It was an analysis of the Moncada events.

He pointed out that in the revolutionary struggle, the people would be the fundamental force, and there he issued a Marxist-Leninist concept of people, adjusted to the Cuban reality, including all the forces, classes and social sectors affected by the regime.

It synthesizes the unfortunate Cuban reality of those moments and it consigns the revolutionary measures and laws that initially would have to be dictated, once the triumph was achieved: the agrarian reform, the integral reform of education, the nationalization of the Electric and Telephone Trust, among others.

He outlines what would be the program to be applied by the established revolutionary government, historically known as the Moncada Program.

It accuses Fulgencio Batista for the violations committed when staging the coup d'état of March 10, 1952 and denounces the crimes committed by the tyranny.

At the end, he returns to the figure of Martí as the intellectual author of the action.

It seemed that the Apostle was going to die in the year of his centenary, that his memory would be extinguished forever.

would be extinguished forever, such was the affront! But he lives, he has not died, his people are rebellious, his people are worthy, his people are faithful to his memory; there are Cubans who have fallen defending his doctrines, there are young Cubans who have died defending his doctrines, there are young Cubans who have fallen defending his doctrines.

there are young people who have fallen defending his doctrines, there are young people who in magnificent atonement came to die

his tomb, to give him their blood and their life so that he may continue to live in the soul of the homeland.

Cuba, what would have become of you if you had let your Apostle die! (p. 234)

And the sentence that closes his plea of self-defense:

Condenadme no importa, la Historia me Absolverá. (p.237)

Historical importance of this document

It denounces the crimes committed with the assailants, it shows the way in which the assault was planned and denounces the social problems that affected the country, making known the measures that the Revolution was going to take once it triumphed, highlighting Martí's thought and the history of Cuba.

It is a document of the Cuban Revolution, one of the main texts in the history of political thought and revolutionary action in Cuba and Latin America.