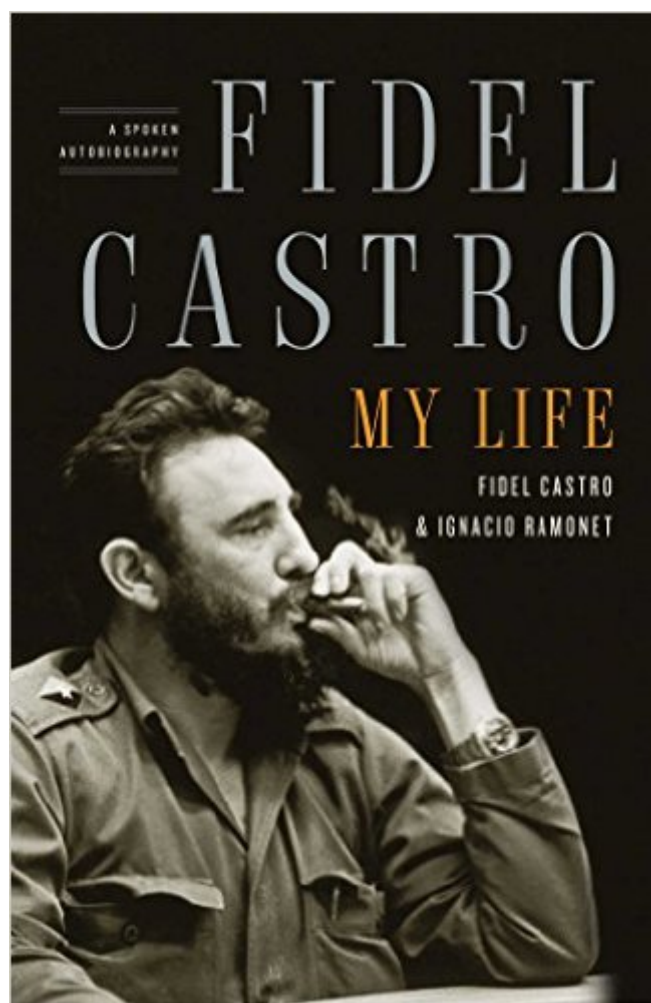


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Fidel Castro: My Life: A Spoken Autobiography



Synopsis

Now in paperback, the intimate and highly revealing life story of the world's longest-serving, most charismatic, and controversial head of state in modern times. Numerous attempts have been made to get Fidel Castro to tell his own story. But it was only as he stepped down after five decades in power, that the Cuban leader finally decided to set out the detail of his life for the world to read. In these pages, he presents a compelling chronicle that spans the harshness of his school teachers; the early failures of the revolution; his comradeship with Che Guevara and their astonishing, against-all-odds victory over the dictator Batista; the Cuban perspective on the Bay of Pigs and the ensuing missile crisis; the active role of Cuba in African independence movements; his dealings with no fewer than ten successive American presidents, from Eisenhower to George W. Bush; and a number of thorny issues, including human rights, the treatment of homosexuals, and the use of the death penalty in Cuba. Along the way he shares intimacies about more personal matters: the benevolent strictness of his father, his successful attempt to give up cigars, his love of Ernest Hemingway's novels, and his calculation that by not shaving he saves up to ten working days each year. Drawing on more than one hundred hours of interviews, this spoken autobiography will stand as the definitive record of an extraordinary life lived in turbulent times.

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Customer Reviews

The First Section of this review is an introduction to Chapters 1 through 9 of Fidel Castro's spoken autobiography by Ignacio Ramonet. Following the First Section, the Second Section consists of four

questions which Ignacio Ramonet asks Castro, and Fidel's answers to them. These questions and answers concern occurrences within Cuba after the triumph of the Revolutionary War on December 31, 1959, and prior to April 17, 1961. First Section. The most impressive thing to me about the first nine chapters of Ramonet's book is how understandably Castro conveys the fact that the Cuban Revolutionary War eschewed terrorism (defined as executing captured, non-uniformed combatants or using random violence against civilians.) Fidel considered such terrorism immoral, but more to the point, he considered it immoral because unnecessary. Terrorism would have been highly counter-productive where the soil for revolution vis-à-vis the imperialistic United States was seeded more widely and far earlier than in Vietnam, for example -- where the Vietcong did employ terrorism in a war against an invasion by America essentially indistinguishable from its unprovoked attack on Iraq in 2003. Similarly, Fidel invoked Che Guevarra's medical skills (and those of other revolutionary soldiers as the revolution gained momentum) to treat wounded Batista soldiers on the battlefield, once the non-fatally wounded revolutionary soldiers were evacuated or cared for. And not infrequently, these cared-for Batista forces, after returning to health, joined the revolutionary forces in the war against Batista. Chapter 1 is an introduction by the book's author, and it should be read first and carefully by anyone largely ignorant of the facts regarding Cuba since 1953, which is to say by 99.

Just arrived by mail, just translated and available, I am reading the preface of Fidel's autobiography by co-author/interviewer, Ignacio Ramonet. The preface is titled "A Hundred Hours with Fidel." You know how some movies can allow you to talk at low moments to yourself or a companion, or some TV shows can, too. Yet, other movies demand your attention to the extent the world must be silent to savor every word, every observation. Baldwin does this for me. James Baldwin is to me, I see now, what Jose Marti is to Fidel, the embodiment of a spiritual value, transcending political dogma, left or right. Opening this book, I had to shut off the radio and the world and let my savory honey-sweetened espresso get cold ... Fidel's selection of Ramonet, a Spanish journalist and editor of *Le Monde*, is reportedly smart and political. He wanted someone who had heaped both praise and criticism on Fidel and Cuba, someone on the outside who wouldn't be easily accused of being a Cuban agent. Ramonet is beginning this autobiography/interview [over 700 pages] with his first meeting Fidel and the unrecorded long hours they spent in Cuba and on foreign official visits. The book was completed a few months before Fidel's "sudden" illness, as if Fidel knew ... What can I say? You get an inspiring picture/impression of the man writer Alice Walker calls A PRIEST. Ramonet writes: "What I discovered during this time was a private, almost shy Fidel, a

polite, affable man who pays attention to each person he talks to and speaks without affectation, yet with the manners and gestures of a somewhat old-fashioned courtesy that has earned him the title of the last Spanish gentleman.

This inspiring book is the result of conversations held in 2003-05. It is an autobiography 'À deux, 'an oral summing-up of Fidel Castro's life by Fidel himself'. Chapters cover his childhood and youth, his meeting Che Guevara, the 1959 Cuban revolution, the failed US attack at the Bay of Pigs, the 47-year US blockade, the incessant media attacks on Cuba, the US state's terrorist attacks on Cuba which have killed 3,500 people, the October 1962 crisis, Che's death, the collapse of the Soviet Union, globalisation, Cuba's relations with Spain, France and Latin America, and Cuba today. Fidel is rightly proud of Cuba's magnificent achievements in education and health. Cuba's primary school children are first in the world in languages and maths. Cuba is first in the world in teachers per person and has the smallest class sizes. Cuba is educating thousands of people from Africa, Asia and Latin America, without charging a cent. Cuba provides government-sponsored scholarships to nearly 30,000 students from 121 countries currently enrolled in Cuba's universities, some 23,000 of whom are being trained as doctors. Cuba is first in the world in doctors per person and is the largest educator of doctors in the world, ten times more than the USA. Cuba sends thousands of doctors to Africa, with its 30 million AIDS patients, while the whole EU cannot send even a hundred doctors there, instead stealing Africa's doctors and nurses. 37,000 Cuban health workers, including 18,000 doctors, are providing services in 79 countries. Since 2004, Cuba's Operation Miracle has restored sight to 1,000,000 patients from 32 countries. Fidel has much to contribute to the debate on globalisation.

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