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Inside the Cuban Revolution. Julia E. Sweig. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002, 254 pages. ISBN 0-674-00848-0. Hard cover. \$29.95

Clifford L. Staten
Department of Political Science
Indiana University Southeast

Julia Sweig, a Council Fellow and Deputy Director of the Latin America Program at the Council of Foreign Relations, is the first scholar to gain access to the classified archives in Cuba's Office of Historical Affairs, Castro's presidential library. These archives house documents that relate to the debates among the leaders of the revolution that overthrew Fulgencio Batista. Sweig, in her myth-shattering book, provides us with new information, new insights and a different and more complete understanding of the revolution that brought Fidel Castro to power.

Since 1959 the official history of the revolution has been based largely upon the writings of Che Guevara who emphasized the role of the *sierra*, Castro's guerrilla army in the Sierra Maestra (the mountains of southeastern Cuba) as the primary force that led to the fall of Batista. The *sierra* occupies an almost mythical status in most histories of the revolution up until now. Guevara downplayed the role of the *llano*, the urban underground made up primarily of middle-class professionals and students, in the insurrection. Carlos Franqui, *llano* leader and the director of *Radio Rebelde*, in his 1976 book *Diario de la Revolución Cubana* was one of the first to challenge this interpretation by providing evidence to suggest that Castro could not have come to power in Cuba without the active support of the urban underground. The *llano* waged a war of propaganda, strikes, demonstrations, bombings, kidnapping, sabotage and assassinations against the Batista government. It played the major role in getting all supplies to Castro's guerrillas in the mountains. Sweig goes one step further and provides plenty of new evidence to suggest that from May 1957 when *llano* leader Frank País was released from jail until the failed general strike of April of 1958, the *llano*, rather than the *sierra*, played the primary role in the opposition to Batista. Ricardo Alarcón, the President of the Cuban National Assembly, in an interview with Sweig states that, "...on that subject [referring to the importance of the *llano*] he [Guevara] really didn't know what he was talking about." Sweig finds that during this time period *llano* leaders, rather than Castro, made most of the decisions concerning strategy, tactics and relations with other opposition groups in Cuba. Thus, Sweig successfully challenges the myths that the *sierra* was the primary cause of the downfall of Batista and that Castro made the majority of the decisions during the revolutionary struggle or at least during the 18 month period of the revolutionary struggle that she investigated.

The first few chapters of the book trace the efforts of Frank País in his struggles to organize the *llano* throughout the country during the spring and summer of 1957. It chronicles his discussions with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and his initiative to bring leading intellectual opposition leaders, including Raúl Chibas and Felipe Pazos, to support Castro and the 26th of July Movement. It was País' initiative, rather than Castro's, that led to the signing of the Sierra Manifesto that was published in July. The book then traces events of the last five months of 1957 after the death of País. The conflicts among the leadership within the *llano*, and between the *llano* and the *sierra*, during these months clearly foreshadow some of the events of the struggle for the control of the revolution from 1959 to 1961. "Daniel" Latour and other *llano* leaders in the National Directorate had to cope with the devastating loss of País and the partial failure of the general strike in August which was attributed largely to the lack of support from the Civic Institutions. Latour, Armando Hart and Enrique Oltuski had to develop strategies concerning the relationship with the Civic Institutions, the Confederation of Cuban Workers and the moderate opposition exiles in Miami. The opposition exiles in Miami presented major problems for Latour and Hart when Pazos and Léster Rodríguez committed the 26th of July Movement to a coalition agreement with other opposition forces in Miami known as the Cuban Liberation Junta. Hart viewed this as compromising the hegemonic goals of the 26th of July Movement, whereas Pazos argued that this was consistent with the Sierra Manifesto. Hart then first maneuvered to bring the 26th of July Movement to dominance within the Junta and then advocated the complete independence of the 26th of July Movement from the Junta. These maneuverings caused Raúl Castro, Celia Sánchez and, in particular, Guevara of the *sierra* to show some distrust toward *llano*. This distrust was primarily based upon Sánchez' perception that Hart had mishandled the negotiations with the Junta, and the constant need for supplies and weapons in the *sierra*. Guevara argued that the Junta was being manipulated by the United States and Raúl Castro argued that the Junta was a "trap of *politiquería*." By the end of 1957 Castro and the other *sierra* leaders had come to the same conclusion as Hart of the *llano*--that the 26th of July Movement

was strong enough to break with the moderate groups in Miami and topple Batista on its own.

The next few chapters of the book focus primarily on the events leading up to the failed general strike of April 1958. It provides evidence of increasing strains between the *llano* and the *sierra* and, after the failed strike, the shift in the balance of power within the 26th of July Movement from the *llano* to the *sierra*. With Hart in jail, it fell upon Marcelo Fernández to coordinate the efforts of the *llano* to bring about a national strike. Decisions concerning the relations with the students through the Federation of University Students and the Student Revolutionary Directorate, and with labor through the National Worker's Front, had to be worked out. Latour began to develop an urban-based *llano* militia to assist in a total war strategy. The *llano* coordinated, organized and developed the plan for the general strike in April. It was in March that the leaders of the *llano* went to Castro in the Sierra Maestra to obtain his support to initiate a national strike. This, coupled with the demand by the Civic Institutions that Batista resign, gave hope to the *llano* leaders that the month of April would be "decisive for the revolution." Castro gave his blessing to the strike although he may have been skeptical about the possibility of its success.

The strike failed for many reasons—the fear in the general population generated by Batista's fierce repression, the unfulfilled promises of arms shipments, the lack of cooperation from the major labor groups (the communists and the Confederation of Cuban Workers), the emphasis placed on armed insurrection and violence rather than the strike itself, and the death of many *llano* militia leaders due to Batista's repression. The failure of the strike is the event that ended the dominance of the *llano* within the 26th of July Movement. On May 3, 1958 the leaders of the *llano* and *sierra* met to discuss the future of the insurrection. The *llano* and the *sierra* were merged with Castro assuming full command. The urban militias were merged into the guerrilla army. Fernández was the only *llano* member to retain any responsibility near to the level that he had prior to the strike. Castro stated that the only way to generate full support for the revolution was to defeat Batista's army in battle.

For the most part, Sweig's book ends at this point in the history of the Cuban revolution. With that said, her book is perhaps the most significant contribution to our understanding of the insurrection in many years. The shift from the dominance of the *llano* to the *sierra* also reflects the changing circumstances within and outside of Cuba at that moment in history. Prior to that time Castro's guerrilla army was not capable of defeating Batista's army in a direct confrontation, and an urban underground was necessary for the survival of the insurrection. By the end of the failed strike in April, urban warfare had outlived its purposes and its limitations had been exposed. Sweig clearly documents this. The time was right for the *sierra* to assume full command of the revolutionary activities. Although the book is written primarily for academics, researchers and those who have a good knowledge of the history of the Cuban revolution in the 1950s, it is also a great read and a good story. It contains elements of failure, success, hope, suspense, intrigue, drama, jealousy and fear—the very things that are part of any revolution. The book is strongly recommended for all university libraries and graduate collections.

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