

and when dawn arrived they were attacked by planes. Though, initially, all of the rebels survived, over the next two weeks ten were captured and sixty-four were killed. Only twelve, including Fidel and Raúl Castro, Ché Guevara, and Camilo Cienfuegos, made it to a mountaintop base guided by local supporters. It was not an auspicious beginning. But in two years, on New Year's Eve 1958, Batista would fly to the Dominican Republic, leaving control of Cuba to the leaders of the 26th of July Movement.

VICTORY

Victory came not simply through military successes, though there were those in the summer and fall of 1958, which gave the rebels control of parts of Oriente Province, demoralized the army, and gave increased confidence to the rebels. A number of other factors also were influential:

1. The island was suffering difficult economic times, making the populace open to a movement which promised a better life, and with business interests looking for an improvement in the economic climate.
2. The corruption, brutality, and savagery of Batista's government caused it to lose what little moral support it may have had. This repression also placed the U.S. government in a situation where it had to separate itself from the dictator.
3. The traditional political parties had also lost moral authority as a consequence of the corruption which typified the two administrations preceding Batista.

4. The members of the 26th of July Movement emphasized the ideals of reform, democracy, and social justice. Pointing to José Martí as their progenitor in Cuba, they gained much support among all sectors of Cuban society, even though there was a lack of clarity about what the ideals meant in practice.

5. In March 1958, when the rebel victory seemed assured, the U.S. government imposed an arms embargo and publicly took a neutral position in the struggle, though in December, its representatives were talking with Batista about resigning so that a provisional government could be established in order to pre-empt Castro's assuming power.

6. Charismatic Castro came to symbolize the revolution and its ideals and provided astute military and political leadership.

Was Fidel Castro a communist on January 1, 1959? There are differences of opinion, but there seems to be general agreement among historians that he was a revolutionary nationalist, though probably not a *communist* revolutionary as the 26th of July Movement took power. In a speech he made in Santiago on that night he said, "The Revolution would realize the dreams of Céspedes, Maceo and Martí." He saw the need for reinterpreting Martí but was insistent that Cuba was to be free for the first time in four hundred years. "The Revolution is now beginning. The Revolution will not be an easy task." The U.S. intervention in 1898 would not be repeated. "Nor would it be as in 1933 when first Carlos