



Fulgencio Batista: From Revolutionary to Strongman

By Frank Argote-Freyre

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Pawn of the U.S. government. Right-hand man to the mob. Iron-fisted dictator. For decades, public understanding of the pre-Revolutionary Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista has been limited to these stereotypes. While on some level they all contain an element of truth, these superficial characterizations barely scratch the surface of the complex and compelling career of this important political figure.

Second only to Fidel Castro, Batista is the most controversial leader in modern Cuban history. And yet, until now, there has been no objective biography written about him. Existing biographical literature is predominantly polemical and either borders on hero worship or launches a series of attacks aimed at denigrating his entire legacy.

In this book, the first of two volumes, Frank Argote-Freyre provides a full and balanced portrait of this historically shadowed figure. He describes Batista's rise to power as part of a revolutionary movement and the intrigues and dangers that surrounded him. Drawing on an extensive review of Cuban newspapers, government records, memos, oral history interviews, and a selection of Batista's personal documents, Argote-Freyre moves beyond simplistic caricatures to uncover the real man—one with strengths and weaknesses and with a career marked by accomplishments as well as failures.

This volume focuses on Batista's role as a revolutionary leader from 1933 to 1934 and his image as a "strongman" in the years between 1934 and 1939. Argote-Freyre also uses Batista as an interpretive prism to review an entire era that is usually ignored by scholars—the Republican period of Cuban history. Bringing together global and local events, he considers the significance and relationship of the worldwide economic depression, the beginnings of World War II, and in Cuba, the Revolution of 1933, the expansion of the middle class, and the gradual development of democratic institutions.

Fulgencio Batista and most of Cuba's past prior to the Revolution of 1959 has

been lost in the historical mists. Cuba had a rich and fascinating history before the Marxist Revolution and the reign of Fidel Castro. This captivating and long-overdue book uncovers it.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Following his overthrow by Fidel Castro, the Cuban dictator Batista entered history as an effigy of brutality, corruption and subservience to Yankee imperialism. In this superb biography, historian Argote-Freyre deepens and complicates that picture. This first of two volumes follows Batista (1901–1973) to his 1940 election to the Cuban presidency, covering his impoverished childhood, military career, seizure of control over the Cuban army during the revolutionary upheaval of 1933 and rule as the strongman behind a series of weak civilian governments in the 1930s. There's a leitmotif of violence and thuggery in the saga, but the author portrays Batista as a subtle, restrained political operator. Loath to rule openly by force, he contends, Batista worked to replace military power with political influence as his stock in trade (even allying himself with the Communists to win election), maintained an accommodating but independent stance toward the United States and advanced a wide-ranging social-reform agenda. Argote-Freyre recovers the complex, dynamic Cuban political scene of the early 20th century, with its party intrigue, militant labor movements, guerrilla folk heroes and secret terrorist societies. Balanced, judicious and fluently written, Argote-Freyre's biography offers an important and long overdue scholarly reassessment of a crucial figure in Cuban history. Photos. 26 b&w illus. (Apr.)

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Review

"Balanced, judicious and fluently written, Argote-Freyre's biography offers an important and long overdue scholarly reassessment of a crucial figure in Cuban history."

(*Publishers Weekly*)

"Written in an engaging style and based on solid scholarship, this work by Argote-Freyre should make us wonder how we have gone this long without an authoritative treatment of the life and times of the man second only to Fidel Castro in his importance to twentieth-century Cuba. A sorely needed contribution."

(Lisandro PTrez *Florida International University*)

About the Author

Frank Argote-Freyre is an assistant professor of history at Kean University and works as an activist in the Latino community.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Linda Poteat:

Reading a e-book tends to be new life style in this era globalization. With looking at you can get a lot of information that will give you benefit in your life. Using book everyone in this world may share their idea. Textbooks can also inspire a lot of people. Lots of author can inspire their reader with their story or their experience. Not only situation that share in the ebooks. But also they write about the knowledge about something that you need instance. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach your young ones, there are many kinds of book that exist now. The authors nowadays always try to improve their talent in writing,

they also doing some research before they write with their book. One of them is this Fulgencio Batista: From Revolutionary to Strongman.

Larry Brackett:

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Sherri King:

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