

**National Period**

*Aldabonazo: Inside the Cuban Revolutionary Underground, 1952–1958: A Participant's Account.* By ARMANDO HART DÁVALOS. New York: Pathfinder Press, 2004. Map. Photographs. Plates. Glossary. Index. 387 pp. Paper, \$25.00.

The historiography of the Cuban Revolution has focused on a variety of trends and tendencies. Cuban publications concerning the struggle against the regime of Fulgencio Batista (1952–58)—whether waged by clandestine guerrillas or by Cubans in exile—have represented this process in terms that depict the period as essentially heroic. In the literature on the guerrilla campaign, the greatest emphasis has been on key moments in this type of struggle taking place in the cities, and to a lesser extent on the activities of members of the July 26 Revolutionary Movement (MR-26-7) in exile, the University Students' Federation (FEU), and the radical student activists of the Directorio Revolucionario 13 de Marzo, fundamental organizations that led the insurrectionary revolutionary movement during this period.

Within contemporary debate, the alternative tendency has been to depict the period of national rebellion using the memoirs of principal protagonists: among others, important political and military actors and, increasingly, through somewhat autobiographical studies focused on Fidel Castro. This forms the context for this book, narrated by one of the representatives of the underground urban movement, who not only participated in the founding of the revolutionary movement that came to power in 1959 but also lived through the events he helped to create and formed part of the leadership of that revolutionary movement. The author reconstructs the events he lived through using his own memories with the help of documentary sources.

This book differs from others in that the author, in bringing his experience to life, offers at the same time a political landscape of the generational conflict reflected in different revolutionary styles, rooted in the Party of the Cuban People (Orthodox) of Eduardo Chibás, whose thesis, which forms the conclusion of the book's epilogue, functions as a call to arms. One of these revolutionary styles—the one that the author originally subscribed to—was the movement headed by Dr. Rafael García Bárcena, organizer of the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR). The MNR employed a different strategy than the revolutionary movement that later evolved into the July 26 Movement, headed by Fidel Castro. It is from this lens that he narrates the various events in which he participated between 1955 and 1959, in the urban underground, in the Sierra Maestra, during political imprisonment, and finally the taking of power. In these settings, stemming from the main action, the fundamental emphasis was on tasks in the capital and the eastern provinces, particularly the activities of the leadership of the MR-26-7 in Santiago de Cuba, as well as the interrelationship with the Sierra Maestra campaign. Virtually absent is any mention of actions in the western and central provinces, a gap that is beginning to be addressed by the historiography.

Other thematic emphases concern the rebellion within the University of Havana,

the assault on the Moncada barracks, and other relevant events and characters. The book contains more than one hundred pages of important documents, other first-person accounts, and photographs.

The narrative presents the "big picture" of the major role played by leaders during the stages and missions that the author participated in: the organization of a national network, the Asamblea del PPC (●) and its influence on the structure of the MR-26-7, the support for a general strike in 1958 in support of the *Granma* expeditionary force, and the insurrectionary uprising in the provinces, as well as the incarceration of political prisoners.

The book sheds light on the historiographical debate over the strategy of the general strike and armed insurrection. Certain passages and documents contribute to the analysis and evaluation of concepts concerning strategies, tactics, methods of struggle, and mentalities, one example of which is expressed in the correspondence between Faustino Pérez and the author, especially in the so-called concept of "the mountains and the plains," as well as references to patriotic and anti-imperialist thought shown in the documents.

Hart Dávalos provides scholars of Cuba a wealth of information with which to stimulate future research. His book will also be of value for students and the general public interested in contemporary Latin America.

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●01 10.1215/●0182168-2007-018