

BOOK REVIEW

In Defense of Socialism

Four Speeches on the 30th Anniversary of the Cuban Revolution

BY FIDEL CASTRO

Reviewed by: Helen Jackson, Director of Research, School of Social Work, Harare, Zimbabwe

This is a collection of four rousing, polemical speeches by Fidel Castro to mark the 30th Anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. There is an introduction by Mary-Alice Waters. The English translations were originally published in *Granma Weekly Review*. The speeches were delivered to different audiences in Cuba between December 5th 1988 and January 1989.

The titles of the speeches indicate their orientation: "As long as the empire exists we will never lower our guard"; "The Cuban people will always remain loyal to the principles of socialism" ; "Thirty years of the Cuban Revolution;" and "The young generation must improve and defend socialism".

Castro describes both the revolutionary nationalist war to overthrow the Batista regime, and the subsequent economic revolution to transform the capitalist economy. He fully acknowledges the difficulties faced enroute, in the face of imperialist aggression and antagonism, and, in particular, the continuing US blockade. He exhibits the fervor, charisma and moral principle that have characterized his leadership.

It must be acknowledged, however, that the speeches do not give any detailed analysis of the problems facing Cuba, including bureaucracy, corruption, technocracy, nepotism, and disillusionment. Castro exhorts his audiences to support the rectification process, to learn from the mistakes of the past, and to build and improve the socialism that has already been developed.

Celebratory speeches on thirty years of the revolution, despite the US embargo, may not be the appropriate forum for a detailed critique. However, this reviewer, in the hope of possibility gaining insights into the Cuban revolution, would have valued a more critical analysis based on the daily realities of people's lives and the very concrete problems inherent in transforming both an economy, and a people's political consciousness.

Considering the subsequent breakup of the Soviet Union, plunging Cuba further into crisis, the rhetoric, and the lack of critical analysis, become all the more stark and anachronistic. At the same time, in the light of the global crisis of socialism, it is in some ways revitalizing to be reminded of the intensity of conviction of one of the world's greatest revolutionary leaders.