

Review

Reviewed Work(s): Aldabonazo: Inside the Cuban Revolutionary Underground, 1952-1958, A Participant's Account by Armando Hart

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Hart, Armando. *Aldabonazo: Inside the Cuban Revolutionary Underground, 1952-1958, A Participant's Account*. New York, NY: Pathfinder Press, 2004. 387 pp.

The 1959 socialist revolution led by Fidel Castro in Cuba dramatically changed the social and political fabric of the western hemisphere. The Cuban revolution started as a small student uprising against Fulgencio Batista's dictatorship and eventually turned into a nation-wide movement that sought to end an authoritarian regime. Armando Hart, who started his career as a student revolutionary at the University of Havana as a member of the Orthodox Party Youth, has written his account of the revolution in *Aldabonazo: Inside the Cuban Revolutionary Underground, 1952-1958, A Participant's Account*. First published in Cuba by Editorial Letras Cubanas in 1997, the book was translated into English by Pathfinder Press, a communist-friendly publishing company. Hart, currently a deputy in the National Assembly and a member of the council of state, examines the entire Cuban revolutionary movement, from its inception in 1952 to its fruition on 1 January 1959.

Fulgencio Batista's 1952 coup d'etat produced a wave of revolutionary activity throughout Cuba. In 1952, Hart joined the Revolutionary National Movement (MNR) and soon their group took the term *Aldabonazo*, which in Spanish means a sharp or warning knock on the door, as their rallying cry. After Hart and his group of student revolutionaries joined forces with Fidel Castro's group in 1954, the revolutionary movement launched its offensive against the Batista regime. In his account of the seven year-long struggle, Hart claims that his group was different from the various bourgeois political parties and associations that opposed the Batista dictatorship. Throughout the narrative, Hart elaborates on how he became so intimately involved with Castro's movement. He explains his arrest and incarceration as a political prisoner under the Batista regime in April 1957, how he escaped in July, and how he was subsequently named national coordinator of Castro's 26 of July Movement. Hart's explanation of the revolutionary movement is interesting because it highlights unfamiliar aspects of the revolution. While there are numerous studies on the Cuban revolution, few are told from the point of view of a participant.

Hart reveals how and why he became a *Fidelista*, or Castro supporter. This occurred in 1954 when Hart went to visit a fellow revolutionary in prison and met Fidel Castro, who was serving time for his revolutionary activities. According to Hart, "he [Castro] was already the natural leader of the new generations of young revolutionaries, as well as of broad sectors of the population" (p. 87). The fact that Castro's revolutionary group was not connected with the traditional political parties enticed even more support from Hart and his student group. Hart explains that Castro was the perfect leader for

the revolution because he encompassed everything they were looking for. Castro was "a political and revolutionary leader, with deep popular and democratic roots, with no ties to the existing system...capable of organizing the masses to action" (p. 88).

A rebellious young law student involved in many political student organizations at the University of Havana, Hart is a typical example of the youth that followed and supported Castro. Hart, along with the revolutionaries that he united at the university, participated in creating the perfect atmosphere for Castro's success.

While there are many studies on the Cuban revolution, *Aldabonazo* is a fresh account of the events. Hart writes his version of the events with great admiration for Castro and what the revolution accomplished. Thus, the account is extremely biased. Filled with interesting primary documents concerning the corruption of the Batista regime and numerous photographs of the revolutionaries, this narrative of the Cuban revolution is relevant for students or scholars interested in reading a participant's account of the revolution in Cuba.

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Taussig, Michael. *My Cocaine Museum*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Rarely in the course of history has human desire been driven to the extremes invoked by gold and cocaine. It is significant historically that nature found a home for both gold and cocaine, two commodities exempt from the traditional restrictions imposed by notions of utility and survival with respect to demand, in Colombia. Michael Taussig, a professor of anthropology at Columbia University, however, refrains from examining the impact of these two commodities on Colombia from the standpoint of traditional history, opting instead to combine natural, public, and political history. As such, he uses a mixture of autobiography, ethnography, allegory, and dialectic theory in order to paint a picture that says as much about the way that modern society interacts with history. He also seeks to explain how people portray what they perceive to be true about gold and cocaine.

In order to achieve his goal, Taussig uses the gold museum located in the Banco de la Republica in Bogota as a prototype for his theoretical cocaine museum. Taussig begins by illustrating the ancient connection between gold and coca. He describes of the golden *poporos* [containers] once used by the Indians to hold the lime that was added to the coca leaves to facilitate the release of cocaine into the body. These artifacts are a prominent feature in