

gy and use of violence, and, more importantly, the deeper sense of historical self that drove Weatherman, understanding this contradiction would be a good place to start. Unfortunately, *Bringing the War Home* does not make that effort.

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**Julia E. Sweig, *Inside the Cuban Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).**

*Inside the Cuban Revolution* by Julia E. Sweig, senior fellow and deputy director of the Latin American program at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), is without a doubt a landmark in the historiography of the Cuban Revolution. The book is the first rigorous investigation of the immediate period before the revolution. As a staff member of the CFR, Sweig was granted unprecedented access to the classified records in the Cuban Council of State's Office of Historic Affairs — the only scholar inside or outside of Cuba allowed access to the complete collection of Fidel Castro's 26th of July movement's underground operatives.

To have access to first-hand sources — letters, documents written by the different actors involved, etc — allowed Sweig to undertake a fearless analysis of a crucial stage in Cuban history: the period preceding the taking of power by Fidel Castro, which covers the 15 months of the Cuban insurrection (early 1957 to mid-1958), when the urban underground leadership was the dominant force within the *26th of July Movement* and Castro did not yet have the political and military initiative.

Using these documents, Sweig argues that in its early days the revolution was influenced more by the Cuban middle class and less by *Fidel Castro* or *Ernesto 'Che' Guevara* than historians have suggested. She explores the complex and often contradictory relations between urban members of the *26th of July Movement (Llano)*, and its mountain-based guerrilla in the *Sierra Maestra (Sierra)*, effectively shattering one of the enduring myths about the Cuban Revolution, forged, in large part, by the official Cuban historiography. Its main author was no one less a figure than Guevara, whose account practically suggests that the Sierra guerrillas single-handedly defeated the Batista regime. Sweig, conversely, demonstrates the preponderant function played by the secret urban organization of the *26th of July* in the triumph of the revolution. Sweig's thesis has considerable implications, because it dismantles the myth on which Castrist ideology is founded: that the *Sierra Maestra* fighters, after conducting a guerrilla war supported by a rural base, achieved a firm military victory

against a regular army, putting an end to the dictatorship of general Fulgencio Batista.

Guevara's role as official historian had its origins in the Sierra Maestra's mountains, thanks to his habit of keeping diaries on daily events that later served as documentation to establish his historical narrative. In these diaries, published as a book entitled *Pasajes de la Guerra Revolucionaria*, Guevara grants all the credit for the overthrow of Batista to the guerrilla fighters of the *Sierra*. His authorship gave this thesis enough genuineness to transform it into an unquestionable truth, in Cuba as much of the world.

Sweig, when demonstrating that this version of history is slanted, also questions the utility of Guevara's model, based on his erroneous historical account, for world revolution. Although it is undeniable that the *Sierra Maestra* had enormous symbolic importance, attracting the attention of the world and establishing the bases for the mythology of the Cuban Revolution, Sweig demonstrates that the *Llano*, in fact, contributed much more to the collapse of the Batista regime.

The book exquisitely exposes the essential role of the urban underground, which skilfully controlled critical tactical and strategic decisions, the allocation of resources, and relations with opposition forces — including political parties, Cuban exiles, and even the United States — thus contradicting the standard view that portrays Castro as the primary decision-maker during the revolution. This is in fact the second myth demolished by Sweig's book: that of the omnipresent figure of Castro during the period of insurgency. Given the absolute authority achieved by Castro after the collapse of Batista's government, it is perhaps understandable that many have assumed that his power was equally formidable during the period preceding his seizure of power; however, the important decisions were not always his to make. The leadership of the urban insurrectionists such as Frank País, René Ramos Latour, or Armando Hart and the organizational authority and ability they exercised during the fight against Batista's regime, were as important, if not more so, than Castro's activities and position.

*Inside the Cuban Revolution* also demonstrates that the *26th of July Movement*, while participating in the fight against Batista, was also involved in an internal struggle for the control of the insurgency with other opposition groups, in order to establish its monopoly on power. Sweig's sources demonstrate that, until six or eight months prior to the insurrection, the tactical decisions of the revolution were in some not very well-known individuals' hands, working in the underground, and not in those of Fidel Castro, his brother Raúl, or 'Che' Guevara. Here the author affirms that, without the work accomplished by urban members of the *26th of July movement* during the first seventeen months of insurgency, victory would not have been achieved in January 1959.

However there are some flaws in the book. Very little detail is given about

the periods between February and April 1957, August 1958 to January 1959, even though these were crucial periods in the Revolution and the insurrection against Batista. In fact, two of the most important events of the entire Revolution are almost completely neglected by the author: the contribution of the *13th of March Movement* and the *Revolutionary Directorate* to the insurgency against Batista and their attack on the Presidential Palace in Havana. But undoubtedly, Julia's E. Sweig's work has the great merit of inaugurating a line of analysis that substantially modifies the way to approach the history of the Cuban Revolution. The book constitutes a major contribution to the understanding of one of the most complex chapters of the contemporary History of Latin America.

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