

FIDEL CASTRO (1926–)

HISTORY WILL ABSOLVE ME (OCTOBER 16, 1953)

Furthermore, it was declared that the Cuban policy in the Americas would be one of close solidarity with the democratic peoples of this continent, and that all those politically persecuted by bloody tyrannies oppressing our sister nations would find generous asylum, brotherhood and bread in the land of Martí; not the persecution, hunger and treason they find today. Cuba should be the bulwark of liberty and not a shameful link in the chain of despotism.

The problem of the land, the problem of industrialization, the problem of housing, the problem of unemployment, the problem of education and the problem of the people's health: these are the six problems we would take immediate steps to solve, along with restoration of civil liberties and political democracy. . . . Eighty-five per cent of the small farmers in Cuba pay rent and live under constant threat of being evicted from the land they till. More than half of our most productive land is in the hands of foreigners. . . . There are two hundred thousand peasant families who do not have a single acre of land to till to provide food for their starving children. . . . Just as serious or even worse is the housing problem. There are two hundred thousand huts and hovels in Cuba; four hundred thousand families in the countryside and in the cities live cramped in huts and tenements without even the minimum sanitary requirements; two million two hundred thousand of our urban population pay rents which absorb between one fifth and one third of their incomes; and two million eight hundred thousand of our rural and suburban population lack electricity The little rural schoolhouses are attended by a mere half of the school age children—barefooted, half-naked and undernourished—and frequently the teacher must buy necessary school materials from his own salary. Is this the way to make a nation great?

Only death can liberate one from so much misery. In this respect, however, the State is most helpful—in providing early death for the people. Ninety per cent of the children in the countryside are consumed by parasites which filter through their bare feet from the ground they walk on. . . . Public hospitals, which are always full, accept only patients recommended by some powerful politician who, in return, demands the votes of the unfortunate one and his family so that Cuba may continue forever in the same or worse condition.

A revolutionary government backed by the people and with the respect of the nation, after cleansing the different institutions of all venal and corrupt officials, would proceed immediately to the country's industrialization After settling the one hundred thousand small farmers as owners on the land which they previously rented, a revolutionary government would immediately proceed to settle the land problem. . . . it would establish the maximum amount of land to be held by each type of agricultural enterprise and would acquire the excess acreage by expropriation it would distribute

the remaining land among peasant families with priority given to the larger ones, and would promote agricultural cooperatives for communal use of expensive equipment, freezing plants and unified professional technical management of farming and cattle raising . . . it would provide resources, equipment, protection and useful guidance to the peasants. . . A revolutionary government would solve the housing problem by cutting all rents in half . . . as each rural family should possess its own tract of land, each city family should own its own house or apartment. There is plenty of building material and more than enough manpower to make a decent home for every Cuban. . . With these three projects and reforms, the problem of unemployment would automatically disappear and the task of improving public health and fighting against disease would become much less difficult. . . Finally, a revolutionary government would undertake the integral reform of the educational system, bringing it into line with the projects just mentioned with the idea of educating those generations which will have the privilege of living in a happier land.

Taken from Fidel Castro, "History Will Absolve Me," in *Latin American Civilization: History & Society, 1492 to the Present*, ed. Benjamin Keen, 6th ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996).

JOHN CAMPBELL (1708–1775)
THE SPANISH EMPIRE IN AMERICA (1747)

Comprehending a Description of the Spanish Settlements

The common Opinion that the King of Spain hath the largest Dominions of any Prince in the World, is so well founded, that nobody hitherto has ventured to contradict it. His American Territories only are sufficient to justify this Notion; and in Truth, when one considers the vast Extent and prodigious Riches of those Provinces, one cannot but wonder that his Catholic Majesty is not much more powerful than he appears to be.

If the Spanish Councils were turned for the Encouragement of Trade, there are in these Countries such a vast Variety of valuable Commodities as might, one would think, furnish the People possessed of them with inexhaustible Treasures . . . it seems to be a thing out of Dispute, that it is not so much the Weakness of the Spaniards, as the Weakness of their Councils, which have occasioned their Losses in these parts . . .

Priests, generally speaking, proceed upon narrow and selfish Views, and so do all Religious Orders, particularly the Jesuits, who therefore are the least qualified for Missionaries, though deficient in no other Respect, which appears from their Conduct in Paraguay, where the Fathers have established a much more regular Government than subsists anywhere else in America, and are able to raise a greater Number of regular Troops in a Week, than could be assembled by the Viceroy of Peru in a Year.

Treating of the Commerce of America

It has been always the ruling Maxim in the Spanish Councils to preserve by all means possible the Commerce with the West Indies, not only to the Spanish Nation, but to the Crown of Spain. On this principle they restrained, with great Punctuality, all Strangers from passing through their American Dominions . . . Thus we see that the lawful Commerce between Europe and Spanish America is entirely in the Hands of the Spaniards, and absolutely subject to the Direction of the Crown.

There is nothing more common than to hear Spain compared to a Sieve, which, whatever it receives, is never the fuller. . . . All who are in any degree acquainted with the History of Europe know, that for a long Course of Years Spain maintained Wars in Flanders, Germany, Italy, and sometimes in Ireland, which created a prodigious Expense of Treasure and Troops . . . By so long a Series of Mismanagement the Spaniards have brought their Affairs into so wretched a Situation, that they neither have, nor can have any very great Benefit from their vast Dominions in America. They are said to be Stewards for the rest of Europe; their Galleons bring the Silver into Spain, but neither Wisdom nor Power can keep it there.

The Methods taken by his most Catholic Majesty for effectually securing the Commerce of his American Dominions to the Inhabitants of Old Spain, is the grand Source of the little Respect paid to him in the Indies, and of the great Weakness of his Government at home. Men, whatever Climates they dwell in, of whatsoever Complexions they be, have the same Inclinations, and the same Resentments, if once you trespass on

their natural Rights . . . When Folks are in such a Situation, there needs be no Wonder at their endeavouring to carry on a clandestine Trade, as, on the other hand, one cannot think it strange that their Neighbours, who live under better Governments, who have at cheap Rates all that these Spaniards want, and yet stand in need of the Silver and Gold with which they abound, should be very willing to commence such an Intercourse as might take away their Wants.

Taken from John Campbell, *The Spanish Empire in America* (London: M. Cooper, 1747): 74, 77, 79–81, 279–280, 291, 296, 306–308.