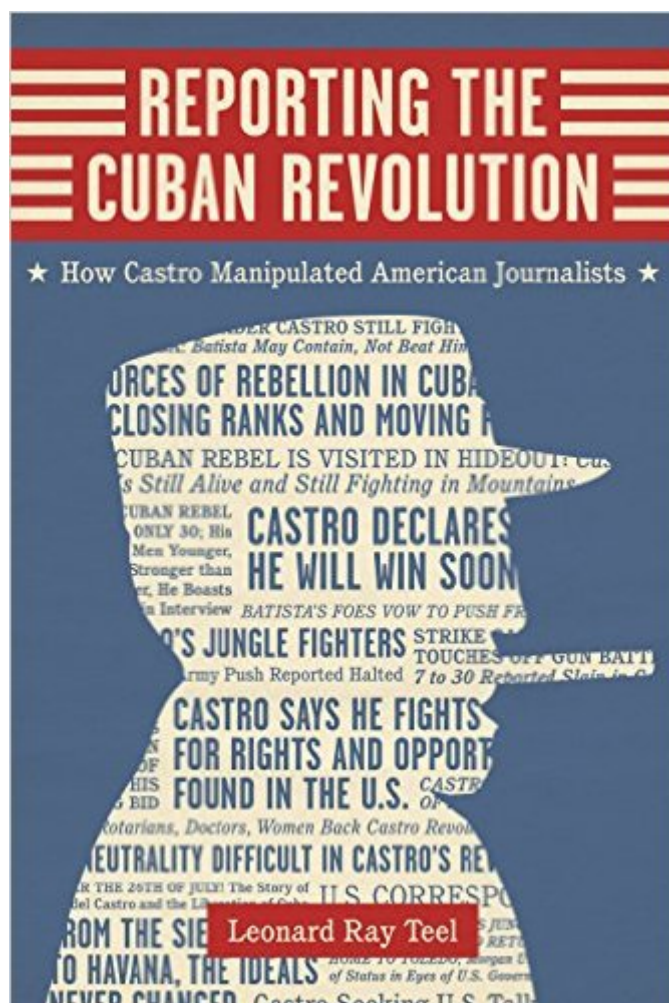


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Reporting The Cuban Revolution: How Castro Manipulated American Journalists (Media And Public Affairs)



Synopsis

Reporting the Cuban Revolution reveals the untold story of thirteen American journalists in Cuba whose stories about Fidel Castro's revolution changed the way Americans viewed the conflict and altered U.S. foreign policy in Castro's favor. Between 1956 and 1959, the thirteen correspondents worked underground in Cuba, evading the repressive censorship of Fulgencio Batista's dictatorship in order to report on the rebellion led by Fidel Castro. The journalists' stories appeared in major newspapers and magazines and on national television and radio, influencing Congress to abruptly cut off shipments of arms to Batista in 1958. Castro was so appreciative of the journalists' efforts to publicize his rebellion that on his first visit to the United States as premier of Cuba, he invited the reporters to a private reception at the Cuban Embassy in Washington, where he presented them with engraved gold medals. While the medals revealed Castro's perception of the correspondents as like-minded partisans, the journalists themselves had no such intentions. Some had journeyed to Cuba in pursuit of scoops that could rejuvenate or jump-start their careers; others sought to promote press freedom in Latin America; still others were simply carrying out assignments from their editors. Bringing to light the disparate motives and experiences of the thirteen journalists who reported on this crucial period in Cuba's history, Reporting the Cuban Revolution is both a masterwork of narrative nonfiction and a deft analysis of the tension between propaganda and objectivity in the work of American foreign correspondents.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The travails of US journalists covering the Cuban rebel underground of the 1950s is actually a well-worn track through the historical jungle, although credit is due to author Teel for assembling their experiences between one set of covers. Herbert Matthews in particular was skewered in Anthony DePalma's "The Man Who Invented Fidel." My primary criticism, though, is that the collage of reminiscence and reportage presented here does not really substantiate its subtitle. Do American journalists *really* follow their ethics of objectivity strictly in any event? Fidel Castro is certainly not the only case, before or after 1959, of partisan journalism served in the American media. Over and over again Teel quotes Walter Lippmann's analogy of the Russian Revolution, that "men saw not what was, but what they wished to see." Yet Cuba in the 1950s was a very different place from early Bolshevik Russia. For what exactly *did* these US journalists *really* see? A small group of bearded young men, in dirty army fatigues, clutching a motley assortment of weapons in remote jungle camps with a price on their heads. The journalists who searched them out saw no giveaway clues as to what these rebels would do with power because, frankly, there were none to see. When Castro spouted the phraseology of democracy, elections, etc., one was virtually forced to take him at his word because there was as yet no track record of judgment. What *was* visible was the pervasive and corrupt brutality of Batista's military-security regime: like nearly all Latin American strongmen of the time touting it was really he defending freedom and democracy.

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