



**Episode 797: The Real Fidel Castro, Not the Cutesy One Who Made Everyone
Literate**

Guest: Humberto Fontova

WOODS: All right, look, I'm a little bit behind schedule here. I don't plan to have tyrants die. I've got the show planned out in advance, you know? But look, better late than never. We got a lot of time to reflect, all the rest of the time to reflect on this guy. So I've read several of your books on the general subject of Castro or Cuba, and — Okay, I mean, we knew he had to die at some point. It happened recently. When you look back at his legacy, if you were on Fox News and they were giving you a 30-second sound bite to sum up this guy, how would you do it?

FONTOVA: Well, like I told MSNBC — Fox invited me, but it was that Sunday morning, and I was — last Sunday morning, and I was duck hunting. Hey, priorities, Tom. Duck hunting, you know?

WOODS: Right.

FONTOVA: I don't have time to go on these nonsense Fox shows when I'm going duck hunting. But as I told MSNBC when they made allowances for my hunt, we're talking about a regime — We're not talking about the little banana republic; we're talking about a Stalinist regime that jailed and tortured political prisoners at a higher rate — obviously not in absolute numbers. Cuba only had a population of 7 million — at a higher rate than Stalin's regime during the height of the Great Terror. At one point in 1961 — so if you do early '60s — 1 of every 17 Cubans was a political prisoner. That's right up there with Stalin. They murdered more political prisoners in their first three years in power than Hitler's regime murdered in his first seven years in power, and they drove 20 times, folks — if you get nothing else out of this show, 20 times as many people to die trying to escape Cuba as have died trying to escape East Germany. And hey, you know something? East Germany had free health care too!

WOODS: All right, we'll get to free health care in a minute, but let's talk about your own personal story, because you were born in Cuba, and your family left I guess in 1961. Can you describe the circumstances?

FONTOVA: Yeah, by the standards of the time we had it relatively easy, but I do tell a story: we were leaving; we were at the airport, me, my mom, my dad, my brother, and my sister. My sister's eight, my brother's five, and I'm seven, and we're getting ready to board a plane. And the commies did this all the time: so just as we're getting ready to board the plane — oh my goodness, we're finally doing it; we're finally getting

out of here — two soldiers come on, and they grab my dad, and they start dragging him off. And at the time, by the way, hundreds of men and boys were being murdered by firing squad weekly. Not executed, because an execution implies a judicial process. Murdered by firing squad weekly.

So we figured he's going to get shot, so my mom goes: "If you're not coming with us, then we're not leaving either." And just before they dragged my dad through the door, he turned around and he said, "You're all leaving, because whatever happens to me" — and remember, we thought he was going to the firing squad — "I don't want my children growing up in a communist country." They dragged him through; my mom somehow sucked it up: "Let's go, kids. We're going on our vacation to visit our aunt in Miami." We already had relatives in Miami who had left a bit earlier. So I just remember getting on a plane with people weeping, mostly women and children, because they were doing this to a lot of the men — the ones who weren't in prison yet.

So we get to Miami, and we got to my aunt's house, and my mom rushes to the phone and calls Cuba. "Where's Humberto?" That's my dad's name. "What happened?" I remember she went, "I know!" She dropped the phone and fainted. My aunt came running up, grabbed the phone, picked it up, screams, "I know!" What they heard was that my father was at secret police headquarters, G2 headquarters where they were torturing and murdering the political prisoners.

So I imagine my mom said, well, I'm in a country without a penny to my name — By the way, folks, everyone left Cuba with the clothes on their back, and they were happy to do it. The communists stole everything you owned. So she said I don't have a penny to my name; my three children to somehow school, raise, feed; I'm in a country where I don't know too many people and barely know the language. On top of that it also appears that I am now a widow. So I guess that was too much for her. But somehow she sucked it up.

A few weeks later we moved to New Orleans, where we had even closer relatives and friends. And folks, when you leave a country with the clothes on your back, you want to go someplace where you really have close friends, you know? Okay, so we get to New Orleans, and we're living there for a few months. The phone rings. My mom picks it up — we're living at another aunt's house. And she screams again, but it was a scream of joy. It was my father calling from New Orleans International Airport: "Can somebody please come pick me up?"

So we somehow scrounged up a car. Somebody must have had a car in our circle of family and friends, and we went to the airport, and we picked up my father. And that was at the time — this was '61. It was a Constellation. And that's when the planes stepped out, and they went and they put the ladder-type deal, the stairs, up against it, and the people walked out. I'll never forget my dad walking down and my mom running across the tarmac, and I'll never forget that hug. So again, that was 1961, late '61. Last weekend and this weekend — my dad's birthday is tomorrow, by the way — he will be hunting and fishing with his children and grandchildren. Our dad had a happy ending, folks. Tens of thousands of Cuban-American families did not.

WOODS: Your father — I just have to point out the justice in all this. Your father outlived Castro, not simply because he's still alive today, but also because he lived to be older than Castro. Is he turning 91?

FONTOVA: No, he's turning 90, actually.

WOODS: Oh, he's turning 90?

FONTOVA: So Castro was about like four months older than him.

WOODS: All right.

FONTOVA: Castro made 90 in August.

WOODS: Okay.

FONTOVA: My dad makes 90 in December.

WOODS: And he's out there super active, which is absolutely great.

FONTOVA: Super active, hunting and fishing like he was my age.

WOODS: All right, now tell me what kinds of things did somebody have to do to get into trouble in Castro's Cuba, bearing in mind that under Stalin it didn't have to be anything. That was precisely the nature of the terror. At least you could say to yourself, Well, I'm not actively organizing against Stalin, so I have nothing to worry about. He kept everybody on his toes by going after innocent people. So what was going on in Castro's Cuba?

FONTOVA: Well, that was the whole point. In fact, they went after innocent people sometimes on purpose, to terrorize. Che Guevara mentioned this in his book. He said you apply terror. So a lot of these executions that were televised — televised! People get all horrified over ISIS? Folks, Castro and Che Guevara beat ISIS by 60 years. They were televising, videoing firing squad murders in January of 1959, precisely for the same reason as ISIS is doing. But the media didn't report that. The media doesn't report that, so most Americans think that it's ISIS who started this practice. It started 90 miles from our shores, folks, by the guy who's hailed by thousands of celebrities and patrician Americans. 90 miles away. But a lot of these executions were precisely of innocent people. There was no due process in Cuba precisely to terrorize: Look, if you dare mess with us, if you don't join us in this revolution, this is what could happen to you.

WOODS: How do you answer the claim that is very, very common — I mean, it's mainstream historians; it's the media; it's everybody. And they claim that at first Castro was simply a wide-eyed nationalist, full of love for his country, but then he was spurned by the U.S., so he had no choice but to fall into the arms of the Soviet Union and become a communist only then. Is your view that he was a commie all along?

FONTOVA: He was a commie all along. That is so bogus, and it astounds me that people still spew that lie. Raul Castro had a KGB handler since 1954. His name was Nikolai Leonov. This is all thoroughly, thoroughly, thoroughly documented in my books. The mainstream media and Fidel Castro have the longest romance. Fidel, Hollywood's favorite tyrant. Che Guevara gets arrested in Mexico City in 1956. He has got the card of Nikolai Leonov in his wallet. So right after Raul introduce Che to Nikolai Leonov, both of them had KGB handlers years before the Cuban. Fidel himself had contacts with Soviet diplomatic groups in Cuba from 1948 at the University of Havana when he was my dad's University of Havana classmate, so this is so idiotic.

As a matter of fact, the United States bent over backwards trying to accommodate Castro. The CIA was completely snookered — completely snookered — by Castro. I've got quotes from — By the way, the CIA is very, very mad at me for publishing this book, especially a gentleman, a CIA agent named Robert Chapman, who was the CIA station chief in Santiago, Cuba. Denounced my book viciously in the International Journal of Intelligence. But he did not address any of the issues.

I have got quotes from the CIA in this book saying everyone in the CIA and everyone in the U.S. State Department were pro-Castro. This is sworn congressional testimony from the U.S. ambassador to Cuba at the time, Earl Smith. Robert Reynolds, who was the Caribbean chief for the CIA in the late '50s, early '60s said, "Me and my staff were all Fidelistas." So the U.S.'s accommodation of Castro, groveling before Castro, contributing money to Castro, started before he was even in power. The CIA delivered checks, signed checks, to Fidel Castro's revolutionary movement in Cuba.

This is documented in my book. So I brought all this out, and boy, did this upset the CIA, especially the CIA guy who was the guy doing it. But he did not refute any of the quotes that I had in here, any of the facts that I — He just said, Well, Fontova's trying to rewrite history. Can you be a little more specific, Mr. Chapman? How? Refute what I put in this book. And he couldn't do it.

So we started accommodating Castro from day one. Castro gets into power in January of 1959. How many of our viewers and listeners realize that the U.S. gave diplomatic recognition — benediction, in other words — to the Castro regime more rapidly than they had recognized Batista's regime, the so-called U.S.-supported dictator. They recognized Castro in record time. They had never given diplomatic benediction to a Latin American country as quickly as they gave that benediction to Fidel Castro. They quickly lavished the Castro government with 200 million in sugar subsidies from the U.S. taxpayers.

Arturo Frondizi, the Argentine president in the early '60s, and he recounts in his memoirs how all during 1959 and 1960 the U.S. made a total of 16 back-channel attempts — he was the conduit — to try to accommodate Castro, to try to figure out the source of his tantrums, because they were still too stupid to realize he was being handled by the KGB.

WOODS: Okay, so Eisenhower recognizes the new regime — ?

FONTOVA: Yeah, Ike was all under — See, Cuba fell to communism; it's a terrible thing. And the problem was the State Department, the fourth floor of the State

Department that was in charge of Latin America, and the CIA — Eisenhower, part of his genius was delegating, but when it came to Latin America, he delegated to the wrong people. And let's be practical. In the late '50s, early 1960s, up into the '60s, Berlin was a crisis point. '56 you had the Hungarian Revolution, '56 you had the Suez Crisis. Who would have dreamed that this would have happened? In fairness to them, who would have dreamed that the Soviet Union had set their sights on Cuba? So that's in fairness to them, but it was under Ike. But the U.S. bent over backwards to accommodate Castro, both as a guerrilla and as a chief executive and as a dictator. The U.S. could not have done more to try to accommodate Castro.

WOODS: All right, but that's between — Okay, so early January, 1959 he gets recognition from the U.S., but by October, 1960, Eisenhower is putting a ban on exports to Cuba. So what happens between the one time and the other?

FONTOVA: Minor detail: Castro walks into every U.S.-owned property in Cuba in July of '60, June of '60, and steals 8 billion from U.S. stockholders and businessmen at Soviet gunpoint and murders and tortures the few Americans who resisted. Howard Anderson is one of them, and it's documented in my book. What they did is they took him in, and they drew the blood from his body first. This was in a court case where the Anderson family was seeking restitution. What they were doing, so much blood was spilling into Cuban soil from all the firing squad murders that the Cuban regime started extracting most of the blood trying to tying them to the stake so they could sell it on the international market. Howard Anderson had most of the blood drawn from his body, and he was sent to the firing squad. This is what was happening to U.S. citizens, folks, along with Cubans, who resisted the theft of U.S. property at Soviet gunpoint.

So what are you going to do? Castro steals 8 billion from U.S. businessmen in Cuba. It was 2 billion at the time; it's worth 8 billion now. The claims at the State Department — so the U.S. says. Okay, what are we going to do? Any businessman who gets robbed blind in the night is going to go, We're not going to give this guy credit, are we? So that is why the so-called embargo was put in place in the first place, folks. Ike didn't wake up on the wrong side of the bed and say, I'm going to punish that little spic guy. No, they stole at gunpoint and murdered U.S. citizens, and that is why they put sanctions in place, sanctions that have not really been in place for about the last 10 to 15 years.

WOODS: All right, let's — I want to talk about health and literacy and all that, but let's first thank our sponsor.

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All right, before we get to the literacy and health things, I do want to say a few words about your books and get some stuff out of there. In particular, you have focused on Hollywood and on the mainstream media in their sympathy for and portrayals of Castro. And it's just sickening to listen to this. They portrayed — I don't care what people's opinions are of Donald Trump, but to think that Castro was better or Trump would be more dangerous than Castro — I don't fear — I fear there might be some bad economic policy, but I don't fear firing squads, for heaven's sake, under Trump. But there's all this crazy nonsense coming out ever since Castro died. Talk about the mainstream media's treatment of Castro.

FONTOVA: Well, and it's not just — See, here's what happens: why is it that so little is known about the revolution? Why is it that most of the things I'm telling our viewers and listeners tonight are somewhat shocking to folks? They don't know it. And it's explained in this book. The mainstream media and Fidel Castro, they started cultivating when they were still guerrillas in the hills —

Here's a quote from Fidel Castro from 1958: "Propaganda is the heart of our struggle. We can never abandon propaganda." Che Guevara's diaries, an entry from 1958, he said, "Much more important than guerrilla recruits for our guerrilla army were U.S. media recruits to help spread our propaganda." That started in 1958, folks.

And you know, you can somewhat excuse them in '58, '57, '59, because really it wasn't clear what Castro was up to. Let's go ahead and give them a pass for that, Tom. But folks, 60 years later they're still at it, you know? You would really think that a few things had happened in the last 60 years that would cause people to question. And what happens is that you don't get a Havana bureau, Tom — you don't get a Havana bureau — ABC, CNN, they all have them. You don't get one unless you're going to play the regime's game.

I have to keep reminding myself that it's been — you know, a whole generation has come up since the Iron Curtain fell. Cuba is an iron-curtain country, folks. In the '40s, the '50s, the '60s, if you were getting a report from East Berlin, from Prague, from Moscow, most Americans would say, Well, good grief, this is being doctored by communists. This is part of a propaganda ministry of a communist country.

But people somehow don't think of that when they see an ABC report from Havana and Associated Press reporting. It's the same thing. The reporters who get to Cuba, if they get a journalist visa, they are essentially going to be a propaganda auxiliary of the Castro regime. It's as simple as that.

I quote a Spanish Vicente Botín, a Spanish reporter for *El País*, and he also worked for a Madrid TV station, who refused to play the game. And he documents it, how the regime, first of all they vet you completely before they issue your journalist visa. And at the time he was — But he got to Cuba and he saw what was actually going on in Cuba, and he says, Wow, why is none of this being reported? I can't believe the lies I grew up believing about Cuba: the health care, the embargo, blah, blah, blah. So he started reporting the truth. Boom! He was out of there in a week. That's why so much B.S. is believed worldwide about Cuba, starting from the revolution to the health care.

WOODS: Well, let's talk about that, because that's come up quite a bit — and also the literacy rate is supposed to be slightly higher than in the U.S. Now I'm going to ask you about that, but even if that were true, my view would be: what are they allowed to read? If I were running a communist dictatorship, I wouldn't care if everybody was literate if all they could read was communist propaganda.

FONTOVA: Certainly they're not allowed to read these books (laughing). I'll tell you that. My books are obviously banned. But so is the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights banned. *Animal Farm* is banned. Folks, I can't stress it enough. It is a Stalinist, iron-curtain regime.

In 1958, Cuba had 88% literacy, now, which you've got to remember is that Cuba had only been an independent nation since 1902. It had been utterly devastated in its War of Liberation. Americans know it as the Spanish-American War, but it actually started several years before, Cuban guerrillas fighting Spain. So Cuba was completely demolished, devastated.

In 1902 they get there, and they start — So all of these advances that you can be hearing about from me took place in the course — basically in about the same amount of time that Castro's been in power: about 55 years. Cuba had 88% literacy. Cuba spent the most on literacy, on education — you can see it from the budget; this is documented in my books — than any country in Latin America. Cuba had a higher standard of living in 1958 than much of Europe. Cubans owned as many cars per capita in 1958 as the fanatical car freaks, the Italians. Cuba in 1958 had almost double Spain's per capita income. It had a higher per capita income than Austria, than Japan. It had a lower infant mortality than France, Germany, and Belgium.

And this is documented, by the way, by the United States, and this was at a time when Cuba was not a totalitarian country, so the figures were given to the United Nations by people who did not have a gun to their head, like Batista. As a matter of fact, most of these figures that I'm giving you were being given to the United Nations, and they were given to international institutions by Cubans who were actually anti-Batistas. Most educated, upper-tier Cubans were anti-Batista. My family wasn't. My family was indifferent. Hey, Batista didn't mess with us. It's typical of these so-called right-wing dictators.

Like I told Soledad O'Brien last week — She was a guest on MSNBC. She was talking about — I said, "Who jumped on rafts to escape from Batista?" Under Batista's rule in the 1950s, folks, more Americans lived in Cuba than Cubans lived in the U.S., and this was at a time that Cubans could leave Cuba with all of their possessions, get a U.S. visa for the — Cuba took in more immigrants as a percentage of population before Castro in the 20th century than did the United States, including the Ellis Island years. So we went from being one of the world's biggest magnets for immigrants to one where 20 times as many people have died trying to escape it than East Germany. What more can you say?

WOODS: How would you account then for — But let's say something about the health situation. Don't they have great free health care?

FONTOVA: It's dreadful. In 1958 they had a great base to work on. In 1958 Cuba had the 13th lowest infant mortality on Earth. Nowadays — this is a good example — most of the doctors or the men and women who became doctors, who had the misfortune of being born in Cuba in the '50s and '60s and got their medical degrees under Castro, when they come to the United States, escaping and otherwise, they cannot pass — They obviously have to be licensed in the U.S. to be practitioners. They cannot pass the exam in the United States to be doctors. They can barely pass the one — Most of them flunk the ones to be doctors' assistants. Bottom line: most Cuban doctors, as the media and the U.N. and the liberals call it, barely qualify as U.S. nurses. It is a complete hoax.

Let me give you an example — Remember Michael Moore's *Sicko*, Tom?

WOODS: Yeah.

FONTOVA: Yeah, remember when that movie — Obviously that was one of Castro's favorite movies. It was shown island-wide for free in Cuba. And Cuban dissidents saw that movie, and they were horrified. They were disgusted. Here we go again. Propaganda and the world's going to believe this like they believed the rest of the propaganda.

And don't you know that Cuban dissidents snuck little mini cameras into actual Cuban hospitals? Not the one that the communist party elite and tourists use, but the ones that Joe Six-pack Cuban uses — not that most Cubans can afford a six-pack, but the ones that the regular Cubans have to go to. They snuck out films of the horrible conditions, fly-infested beds without sheets, just horrible, horrible conditions. And they were going to show it on ABC. John Stossel was going to show it back when he was on ABC, and the show was going to be "What Michael Moore Didn't Show You." And we all went, Wow, wow, this is great. I was getting brief on this by my friends who were friends with Cuban dissidents. This is going to be great.

Well, guess what: the regime got wind of this, and they called in the ABC people in Havana. This shows you how they manipulate. They said if y'all do this, if y'all show these, we're really going to have to reconsider the renewal of your Havana journalists bureau. So in other words, they blackmailed them. They were going to boot them just like they booted Vicente Botín for showing the truth. ABC, John Stossel caved. They caved. They showed a very sad — They did show a show, but they didn't show the most hard-hitting parts of those films.

The dissidents call my friends in Miami and say, Humberto, this is horrible. These dissidents in Cuba generally, literally almost, risked their lives to get these films out. We smuggled them to the U.S., and what's going to happen? ABC caved. I said, Hold on a for a second, folks. Hold on; let us not despair. This is 2008. Hold on, let me go ahead. Let me call somebody who doesn't have a Havana bureau. So I called Hannity's producers, and I called O'Reilly's producers, and they called back immediately. Told them what I had. But Hannity's producers called a little quickly [inaudible] Hannity's, and Hannity showed it, folks. And you can see it on YouTube. Hannity: what Michael Moore didn't show you.

But that goes to show you how they manipulate the U.S. media. Fox didn't have a Havana bureau, so they had nothing to lose. ABC did, so they were going to be a typical propaganda auxiliary of the regime.

WOODS: But I can understand why the media is that way, because, as you say, they can't get access otherwise. How do we explain away all the actors and actresses in Hollywood?

FONTOVA: Well, where do they get their news? And by the way, again, they're not going to get a Havana visa. They're not going to get a so-called tourist or a cultural visit visa without playing the regime's game. What it is, people want to believe this. They want to believe it. Hey, that's the guy who poked the eye of Uncle Sam. So as I mentioned, as we heard a little earlier, as I told you in the document, he did nothing but poke — In fact, he was put in power by Uncle Sam, and Uncle Sam did —

That's another weird thing. Oh, he defied 11 U.S. presidents. Folks, I told you earlier how the U.S. helped put him in power in 1959. August of 1959, anti-communist Cubans mounted a plot to get rid of Castro and to kill him, because the people involved in this plot knew him from his Soviet — knew the Soviet and said the only way we're going to save our country is to kill Castro and the top leadership and stuff. August of '59, these anti-communist Cubans knew how Castro had taken power, so they did not alert the U.S. to this. Good grief, no. Well, the U.S. got wind of it anyway, and the U.S. ambassador to Cuba — Philip Bonsal was his name — actually alerted the Castro regime to this plot, and they grabbed them, and they imprisoned and tortured the plotters thanks to the U.S. ambassador to Cuba.

Comes the Missile Crisis. What do we hear in the news? Oh gosh, Kennedy stood up to the Russians. Oh, that was so cool how Khrushchev — Total poppycock. In his own memoirs, Khrushchev says, We got exactly what we wanted from Kennedy: security for Castro regime and U.S. missiles removed from Turkey and Italy. Now, the deal that Kennedy signed with Khrushchev said, We promise not to invade Cuba if you get the missiles out of Cuba. Khrushchev is going to get them out anyway. But here's the part that people will mention: we also promised to prevent anyone else in the Western Hemisphere from molesting the Castro regime.

So in effect, after October of 1962, the United States became the Castro regime's protector by treaty. As late as 1983 this was in effect. I knew people who were involved with helping the Nicaraguan contras at the time, and so they said — and remember, the Reagan administration was helping fight communism in Nicaragua and El Salvador and so forth. And they said, Great, we're doing this here. Now when we finish in Nicaragua and El Salvador, can we go to the source of the problem in Cuba? And there's an interview in my book with Elliott Abrams, where he mentions that, no, we cannot go to the source, and beating around the bush it was the Kennedy-Khrushchev pact that would prevent it. So far from defying the U.S., as the media and idiots constantly say about Castro, he hid behind the U.S.'s skirts.

WOODS: I want to urge people to check out your books, Humberto, because first of all they're going to love all the information that's in them, but they're also going to enjoy reading them, because they're written the same way you give interviews, all right, so if you enjoyed this episode you're really going to like them.

FONTOVA: (laughing)

WOODS: The ones in particular that are relevant to what we're talking about is *Fidel: Hollywood's Favorite Tyrant* and *The Longest Romance: The Mainstream Media and Fidel Castro*. You're going to get a lot of great stuff in there. I'm going to link to them at TomWoods.com/797. And Humberto, is there a —

FONTOVA: Yeah, my website. My website is HFontova.com.

WOODS: I was just going to ask you: how do people follow you?

FONTOVA: Yeah, if you put either "Humberto" or "Fontova" into Google, my website's the first thing that comes up, and all of my weekly columns and all of my books are linked there. Thank you.

WOODS: All right, HFontova.com, I'm also going to link to that on the show notes page. I love how you got that Ted Nugent blurb right there on the home page (laughing).

FONTOVA: Good old Ted, he's helped me a lot.

WOODS: That's just great. Well, thanks so much for your time. I mean, people were begging me to do this episode, so we finally got to it. And they are going to be so glad when this one comes out. It's one of my favorites ever. Thanks so much.

FONTOVA: And I came in early from a duck hunt to accommodate it, because I was tickled to be on this with you, buddy. Thanks a lot.

WOODS: You are such a good man, Humberto; thanks again.

FONTOVA: (laughing) Okay, thanks.