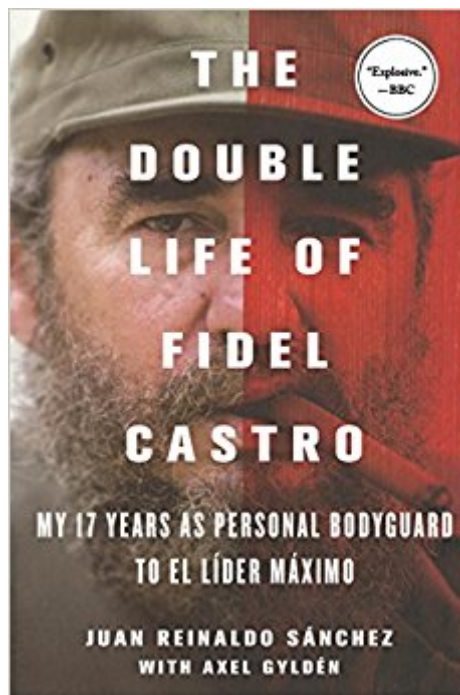




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The Double Life Of Fidel Castro: My 17 Years As Personal Bodyguard To El Lider Maximo



Synopsis

In *The Double Life of Fidel Castro*, one of Castro's soldiers of seventeen years breaks his silence and shares his memoirs of his years of service, his eventual imprisonment and torture for displeasing the notorious dictator, and his dramatic escape from Cuba. Responsible for protecting the *Líder Máximo* for two decades, Juan Reinaldo Sánchez was party to his secret life: from the ghost town in which guerrillas from several continents were trained; to Castro's immense personal fortune, including a huge property portfolio, a secret paradise island, and seizure of public money; as well as his relationship with his family and his nine children from five different partners. Sánchez's tell-all exposé reveals countless state secrets and the many sides of the Cuban monarch: genius war leader in Nicaragua and Angola, paranoid autocrat at home, master spy, Machiavellian diplomat, and accomplice to drug traffickers. This extraordinary testimony makes us reexamine everything we thought we knew about the Cuban story and Fidel Castro Ruz.

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Customer Reviews

"Explosive." *BBC* "Remarkable revelations! Fidel Castro's worst hypocrisies, regal indulgences, and narcissistic excess are bared by his former chief bodyguard. Sanchez, and respected French journalist Gyldeón, depict the Cuban leader as no writers ever have before." *Brian Latell*, author of *After Fidel and Castro's Secrets* "Sánchez's nonstop

revelations, energetic voice, and cognitive dissonance are liable to entertain and intrigue almost any audience." *Library Journal* "S  f  nchez's account shows the real Castro. Vengeful, self-absorbed, and given to childish temper tantrums a la tropical storms . . . The book is timely." *The Wall Street Journal* "Juan Reinaldo S  f  nchez exposes the drug dealing and deception of the former Cuban president." *NYPost.com*

LIEUTENANT COLONEL JUAN REINALDO S  f  NCHEZ was Fidel Castro's personal bodyguard for seventeen years before being imprisoned in 1994 for the "crime" of wanting to retire early. He left Cuba in 2008 after ten unsuccessful bids to escape. He made a new life in Miami, where he passed away in May 2015.

The crux of Juan Reinaldo S  f  nchez's book, for me, comes half way through when he describes accompanying Fidel Castro to Moscow for Leonid Brezhnev's funeral. There, after 65 years of communism, he witnesses even more hardship than in Havana. For the first time ever, he finds himself wondering if communism really is superior to capitalism. Four weeks ago, I flew home from my first trip to Cuba. My impression of the eight days with a group of Americans is that we were shown a carefully crafted image of the country. I speak fluent Spanish and have lived and traveled in Latin America for four decades. Even so, I was able only on a few occasions to scratch the surface of that image. The overwhelming question in my mind, for which I have no convincing answer, is that, seeing the results of 56 years of "revolutionary sacrifice," how can anyone believe that communism/socialism is superior to capitalism? While some readers may say that much of what S  f  nchez describes has been reported by others, this is his unique version. S  f  nchez comes across as an exceptionally intelligent, educated and accomplished man, yet he's quick to admit that for many years he would have readily given his life for Fidel Castro. As he tells the story, Castro didn't hesitate to have S  f  nchez thrown in prison when he asked to retire, accusing him of plotting to defect. The chapters on his imprisonment and his harrowing escape from Cuba after twelve years of failed attempts had me glued to the final pages of this intriguing book.

He's not dead yet, although old, frail and retired from power. He's probably enjoying what he sees as vindication of a half century of struggle by a craven U.S. president who has caved to open relations with Cuba while having received no significant human

rights concessions in return. It makes me sick to even think about it. It betrays the risks of a million people who braved shark-filled waters to escape the island prison known as Cuba. This book tells who Fidel Castro really is, as one of his closest bodyguards saw him. And what Juan Sanchez saw is a hero of the Revolution who is effectively a billionaire (one estimate put his net worth at \$900 million), living in great luxury in a dirt-poor country he turned into a police state while preaching revolution and anti-materialism and equality. Fidel is the Kim Jong Un of the Caribbean. Sanchez notes, though, that Castro held dictators like North Korea's Kim in contempt because they were so inept politically. They're seen as clowns, but Castro made himself the darling of the Third World and the radical left and the socialists and the intellectuals. Castro owns around 20 homes. Included is an island retreat so secret virtually no one outside of his inner circle even knew about it. It is a hideaway for him and his family and a family so secret hardly anyone knew about them either, his second wife and five kids on a previously uninhabited key a few miles off the Cuban coast. Castro sport-fished nearly every day. Fishing trips wouldn't end until he'd caught more fish than his companions of the day, even if they all had to fish until 3 a.m. for him to do it. There's the family compound outside Havana, where Fidel has livestock and crops, in part because as a landowner his son is interested in agriculture, but also because growing his own food helps him protect from being poisoned. Each member of the family had a dairy cow that produced for that person alone, there being taste differences from cow to cow. Sanchez, meanwhile, notes that he and other guards misbehaved: early in the morning, they would steal eggs that Fidel's free-ranging chickens laid around the grounds, because their own families, like most other Cuban families, were so hungry on the government-controlled rations. And Fidel got a home on the presidential guard base in Havana a quiet little hideaway where he sees his mistresses. One of Sanchez's jobs was to divert the guard with meetings on the other side of the base when told Castro would be entering with a date, so that most of the guard was unaware of it. Sanchez doesn't trash him totally. While Castro fooled around at a level typical of Latin men, he didn't devolve into having orgies the way some politicians do. Sanchez admits that for much of his adult life he basically worshipped Castro, both from being up close and personal with him so much, and also because he believed in the Revolution. What disillusioned him were two things: a visit to Moscow where he saw how poor people were 70 years after their own revolution, which Cuba was supposed to be emulating, and the framing and execution of one of Cuba's most famous and legendary soldiers on drug charges

to shield Castro, who was himself involved. Sanchez would have stayed on board, though, had he not one day been deemed a security risk because a couple of his relatives had fled to the U.S. He describes his own flight from Cuba, after getting out of prison, involving ten failed attempts to leave on a boat before one finally succeeded, getting them to Mexico and then the U.S. border where he and others could claim political asylum. One of Sanchez's jobs was to keep Castro's daily diary and what he did, who he met with, what was discussed, how many fish Castro caught and so on. He often ran the wiretapping of meetings and as such listened in on a lot of them. Thus he had an unparalleled ringside seat of Castro's political activities. He saw Castro's many homes because he guarded Castro at each one, often in the advance party charged with securing them before Castro's arrival. Sanchez rode in Castro's car with him, and describes security measures. Castro kept an automatic rifle at his own feet in the car, and handed it over to his wife every night for safekeeping, in a tender welcoming ceremony. (Hi, honey, I'm home, would you put away my AK for me?) Castro, says Sanchez, was far more responsible for both the Allende government in Chile and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, than most people realize. He was the godfather of both revolutions. He trained the Sandinistas, and in Chile, he was manipulating Allende's government to ensure that his successor (had he not been assassinated by Pinochet's anti-Communist forces) would be a more revolutionary sort than Salvador Allende himself was. Castro disapproved of Allende's willingness to participate in the electoral system. There's a lot in this book, and meanwhile Sanchez keeps it moving quickly. He works hard to get beyond the close-up detail and into the world of global politics that Castro inhabited.

What an eye opener. I checked and the author was the "real deal" and was in fact Castro's personal body guard. I read the book as part of my own study plan prior to a trip to Cuba. When Fidel won his battle for Cuba in 1959, I was a high school graduating student. I remember the celebrations in Miami in Little Havana. This book reveals that Fidel was just another brutal Latin American dictator. While conditions improved for a very few Cubans at the bottom of the good chain, by and large most of Cuba suffered under his leadership. An absolute "must read" for anyone looking for the truth about Fidel.

This is a fascinating account of the secret life of Fidel, and confirmation of the hypocritical practices

of dictatorial regimes everywhere. My principal criticism is that this book is too short; much more could be revealed.

Excellent narration of the private life of Dictators Fidel and Raul Castro. Lieutenant Colonel Juan Reinaldo SÃfÂ¿nchez offers valuable insights into the direct involvement in the drug trade to the United States by the Castro brothers. In fact, SÃfÂ¿nchez indicates that Fidel rationalized the drug trade to the U.S. as a means to bankroll subversion, in addition to corrupting and destabilizing American society. This is a must read for anyone trying to comprehend the opposition by the majority of Cuban-Americans to President Obama's 2014 Cuba Policy. There are a few errors in the book, but they are minor. For example, President George H.W. Bush was the one who launched Operation Desert Storm in 1991, and not George W. Bush (p. 3), and Fulgencio Batista fled to the Dominican Republic on January 1, 1959, and not Portugal (p. 23). Batista subsequently settled in the Portuguese Madeira Islands, and, then, Marbella, Spain -- where he died in 1973. SÃfÂ¿nchez died in Miami, Florida, on May 27, 2015. His death is questionable, just like the mysterious deaths of Laura PollÃfÂ¿n (co-founder of the protest group Ladies in White) and Oswaldo PallÃfÂ¿n (one of the most powerful voices of dissent against the Castro brothers). The book also offers a close look at the Arnaldo Ochoa case.

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