

Written by [Gary Benoit](#) on December 31, 2008

Birch Society's Robert Welch Was Correct on Castro

Both before and after Fidel Castro came to power in Cuba on January 1, 1959, the major media in America portrayed him as a champion of the Cuban people and a freedom fighter who was not a communist. It was not until December 1961, when Castro himself said he was a communist, that the media acknowledged this truth. Later, in an April 26, 1963 press conference, Dwight Eisenhower, who was president when Castro came to power, opined: "It would have taken a genius of prophecy to know that Castro was a Communist when he took control of Cuba." But Eisenhower did not say that Robert Welch (shown), who founded the John Birch Society the month before Castro came to power, was warning at the time that Castro was a communist.



On December 8, 1958, at the founding meeting of the John Birch Society, Robert Welch warned: "If you have any slightest doubt that Castro is a Communist, don't. If he is successful, time will clearly reveal that he is an agent of the Kremlin." That warning was issued almost a month before Castro came to power.

Three months earlier, in the September 1958 issue of *American Opinion* (a predecessor of *The New American*), Welch wrote: "Now the evidence from Castro's whole past, that he is a Communist agent carrying out Communist orders and plans, is overwhelming." And in *American Opinion* for December 1959, he stated: "Castro is a Communist. Period. He is not just pulled and tugged by Communist influences and steered by Communist advisers. Fidel Castro himself has been a conscious and dedicated agent of the Kremlin ever since his student days. His whole 'revolution' followed the Communist pattern, used Communist techniques, and was supported and managed by Moscow."

Of course, Robert Welch's warning that Castro was a Communist was not based on prophesy or clairvoyance, but on evidence - some of which is summarized in our online article "[Castro's Rise to Power in Cuba](#)." The evidence should also have led the American media to the truth, but what they reported was very different. Consider:

- Herbert L. Matthews of the *New York Times* reported in his paper's February 24, 1957 edition: "[Castro] has strong ideas of liberty, democracy, social justice, the need to restore the Constitution, to hold elections." In the *Times* for July 16, 1959, more than six month after Castro came to power, Matthews wrote: "This is not a Communist revolution in any sense of the word and there are no Communists in positions of control."
- William Attwood of *Look* claimed in the magazine's March 3, 1959 edition: "We can thank our lucky stars that Castro was no Communist."
- In the April 1959 issue of *Reader's Digest*, Dickey Chapelle wrote: "The Cuba of Fidel Castro today is free from terror. Civil liberties have been restored, and corruption seems to be drying up."
- *Newsweek* reported on April 13, 1959: "Castro's vision has a capitalist base. He wants a country in which every farmer owns his own land."



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All of the above quotes were before December 2, 1961, when in a five-hour-long televised speech Castro said: "I am a Marxist-Leninist and will be until the day I die." He also said on the same occasion that he had hidden his belief in communism "because otherwise we might have alienated the bourgeoisie and other forces which we knew we would eventually have to fight."

But Castro's communism was also hidden with the help of the American media, and the John Birch Society's founder Robert Welch's warnings were not heard by enough people prior to Castro's acquisition of power to overcome the major-media spin or to alter American foreign policy, which at the time was [tilted on behalf of Castro](#).

Photo of Robert Welch in 1963: AP Images



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