***Castro Opposition Fact sheet.***

***Who and why opposed Castro?***

* landowners who had been forced off their land.
* industrialists who had had their factories taken over by the state.
* peasants who felt aggrieved at having been forced into collectivization.
* pro-Americans who had been forced to break their commercial and financial links with the USA.
* those badly affected by the failure of Castro’s economic diversity program.
* those who were offended by the ineffectiveness with which Castro’s government operated.
* those who considered that the political constraints and repression imposed by the regime were unjustified by any of the internal or external threats supposedly facing Cuba.
* writers and artists whose works were subjected to government censorship.
* editors and journalists who objected to the curtailment of their press freedoms.
* academics who resented the government’s encroachment on university freedoms
* the trade unions, which had lost their independence.
* professional bodies and associations, such as those representing businessmen, solicitors, and teachers, who were angered at their being brought under state control.
* lawyers who chafed at the government’s asserting the right to appoint judges, a move that amounted to state control of the judiciary; their objections were voiced by Manuel Urrutia, a judge who had previously opposed the Batista regime and who, despite his re-appointment to the bench by Castro, chose to resign in protest at the new regime’s suspension of elections.
* those who were dismayed by the way Cuba’s revolutionary government became centered in the person of Fidel Castro himself; such personalizing of authority undermined the notion of the 1959 revolution as a movement of the people.
* those among Castro’s former supporters who were disturbed by his insistence on fighting wars abroad on behalf of liberation movements in such far-off countries as Angola, Zaire (later renamed the Congo) and Ethiopia, as well as closer to home in Latin America; they found his preoccupation with anti-imperialist campaigns merely drew attention to his failure at home to extend to his own people the rights that Cuban soldiers were fighting and dying for elsewhere.
* those who had fled the island because they knew their days of privileged living were over or because they simply felt they could not live in the repressive society Castro was creating.
* those in the cultural scene who resented the regime’s restrictions on artistic freedom. Often expressed in protest songs, a main target of their complaint was the bureaucracy that had grown up under Castro, interposing itself between him and the people

***Emigrants***

By 1968, 350,000 Cubans, nearly 5 percent of the population, had left the island.

***Opposition weakness***

Although the opposition groups looked to be a large and formidable array, they were never as serious a threat as appearance suggested. It was only the US-backed émigrés who represented real resistance, and when they did openly challenge Castro, as at the Bay of Pigs, they were decisively beaten.

* Opposition was never a united, organized body and the disaffected groups were unable to concert their efforts, even had they ever seriously planned to challenge Castro.
* Castro’s status as the embodiment of Cuban aspirations meant that opposition to him seemed unpatriotic and so rarely gathered popular support.
* The firmness with which Castro dealt with challenges rendered it a hazardous venture to try to oppose him.
* Cuba’s close-knit society made it easy to monitor opposition movements through eavesdropping and surveillance. The DGI, an organization which operated under Fidel Castro’s direct control, was a highly effective means of detecting his enemies in Cuba and outside.

***Assassination attempts by the opposition:***

* 638 assassination attempts on Castro by both Cubans and Foreign States.

**Black Spring-2003, 75** dissidents **imprisoned.**

* “Ochoa Affair” In June 1989, Cuba experienced its most serious internal opposition crisis since 1959. Four senior military and intelligence figures- including General Arnaldo Ochoa- and several others were arrested on charges of corruption and drug smuggling. Who favored Gorbachev-style reforms, were planning a coup. The crisis caused serious divisions in Cuba. However, the economic crisis of the Special period that soon followed brought about a new sense of unity.
* Aldana and the 1992 purge: However, during the “special period of time of peace” announced by Castro at the end of 1990, another reformist tendency emerged in the PCC and the Young communist party, where several members admired Gorbachev's policies. This opposition was led by Carlos Aldana and called for some limited political pluralism.
* US Actions, 1992-96: The idea of a revolutionary Cuba under siege is part of the mythology of the revolution, and had led to mass mobilizations, revolutionary political offensives, and popular militarization. In the 1990’s, moves against potential opponents were also a response - once again - to increased threats from the USA. The Torricelli Act of 1992 and the Helm-Burton act of 1996, respectively, tightened US economic sanctions against Cuba and sought actively to “assist” in the creation of the USA’s form of democracy in Cuba. In March 1996, Castro acted against academics in the center for the study of America (CEA). They did not lose their jobs, but they were moved to different posts.

* “Re-moralization” and the Varela Project: By 1996, most of the economic measures of the special period had been stopped, then, in 2003, Castro decided on a partial return to anti-market centralization. This also involved the ‘re-moralization’ of economic life. Associated with this were further moves against potential opponents, dissidents, and human rights activists. The minister for economics and planning and the minister of finance, both of whom were closely connected to the liberalization of policies under the Special Period during 1993-96, were replaced by ministers favoring centralized political control of the economy and society.
* Unions: The main mass organization is the Confederation of Cuban workers (CTC), which united all 19 unions and organized national congresses for workers to discuss issues. These are preceded by months of meetings of worker’s assemblies at local level. Castro and other leaders participate at times, to answer questions and to explain important issues. According to Saney, the worker’s assemblies have considerable input and say in their workplaces and in major national political decisions. By law, workers meet twice a year in their workplaces to discuss their company’s economic plans. They can reject management proposals, decide production norms and rates, and any new proposals are subject to ratification. Though they work closely with the PCC, they are independent of the government, which must consult the unions on all labor matters.
* Occasionally, however, to reduce political tension, Castro would allow large numbers of Cubans to leave. One such moment occurred in 1980 when 10,000 people, reacting against food rationing, besieged Cuba’s Peruvian embassy appealing for asylum.
* After Castro abolished celebrating Christmas in 1969 by stating that it interferes with the sugar harvests of Cuba. The church had quickly run to oppose the increasingly atheist state but were swiftly removed from the public eye by Castro’s orders to stop supporting the church and increased scrutiny of it.
* The Havana riot of August 1994 was one of the biggest demonstrations of resistance presented against Castro.
* Caused by the build of tension from civil unrest since the 1980’s due to Castro forced emigrations alongside use of government violence against minorities and dissident, the opposition took up the streets of Havana to protest Castro’s regime.
* A famous group of Cuban exiles, the brothers to the rescue, were an organization which had rescued refugees between Cuba and Florida.
* Though tension between Castro and the group was not stable as the organization went against Castor's regime and supported exiled emigrants it was not until one of the groups planes was shot down by the Cuban Airforce which had then shown Castro’s response to opposition and increased tensions between the two.