**Castro’s policies: were they a complete success?**

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/castro/filmmore/pt.html

Watch this section of “An American Experience: Fidel Castro” (from 1:17.15 to 1:27) (in folder too)

The transcript of this section is below.

This section talks about successes and failures of Castro’s policies. Add to your notes any extra information about policies.

**1. Make a separate list where you note the failings of Castro’s regime. After you have watched this segment, think about these failings.**

**2. Discuss within a group. Are they the result of totalitarian rule or can they be attributed to other factors? Write down your answer in a paragraph entitled “Castro: a hero for social justice and a villain of human rights”**

**NARRATOR:** As the prospects of world revolution dimmed, Fidel Castro turned his energies back toward transforming Cuban society. He set out to build Communism in record time -- faster than the Soviet Union, even China. Fidel would even try to mold a new man, selfless, dedicated, incorruptible. There were some real achievements: children in Cuba did not go hungry. The sons and daughters of peasants and workers received a free education, one day becoming the engineers and doctors of revolutionary Cuba. Hospitals and clinics were built in the farthest reaches of the island -- the foundation of a system that would eventually deliver health care to all Cubans. Prostitution and gambling virtually disappeared. But Cuba's socialist economy bordered on disaster. The U.S. embargo, the flight of managers and technicians to the United States, and economic mismanagement had left factories idle, store shelves empty, basic goods strictly rationed. La cola -- the waiting line to purchase whatever was available--became the staple of daily life. Cubans called Castro "El Señor Habrá" -- Mr. There-Will-Be -- and joked that if Spanish lacked a future tense, Castro would be rendered speechless. But Cubans could do little more than trade jokes. In Castro's Cuba, criticism was not permitted. There were no newspapers, except official ones. No books, except those sanctioned by the regime. Artists, hippies, homosexuals, Jehovah Witnesses, were labeled "antisocial," rounded up, and sent to labor camps. Jails filled with prisoners -- who simply spoke out against the regime and to those who committed acts of violence.

**ARCHIVAL FILM:**  
**2ND MAN:** (captioned) I was fighting in the mountains. They think that I killed people.

**REPORTER (OFF CAMERA):** Was that true?

**2ND MAN:** I don't know. I was judged in a tribunal.

**REPORTER (OFF CAMERA):** Did you have a fair trial?

**MAN:** No.

**MARIFELI PEREZ STABLE:** There were thousands of political prisoners. Castro himself, in the mid 1960s, admitted to 20,000 which is already a staggering number already makes Cuba one of the highest, if not the highest, for per capita political imprisonment in Latin America's 20th Century. The figure was probably closer to forty or maybe even fifty thousand.

**NARRATOR:** In March of 1968, Castro moved to eliminate the last vestiges of Capitalism in Cuba. He decreed all private businesses illegal - street vendors, neighborhood cafes, shoe repair shops. "Fixing a toaster in Cuba," one visiting economist commented, "has now become a matter of State."

**WILLIAM LEOGRANDE:**He traveled in the 1960s, constantly around the island, checking up on local managers and administrators, and trying to solve problems himself, first-hand. He didn't delegate authority. And the result, of course, is that Fidel could not be everywhere. And so consequently, -- when he wasn't there to make a decision, the decision didn't get made because no one else felt they had the authority to make the decision.

**JORGE DOMINGUEZ:**Fidel Castro is an enormously self-confident man, and he understands who he is, what he wants to do, where he wants to go, and he believes that he can do it. He fails to understand that there are many things he does not know. That there are a great many instances where people do not support him and he will not be able to accomplish his goal.

**NARRATOR:** Fidel undertook one scheme after another: draining the Zapata swamp, planting a circle of dwarf coffee around Havana, creating a new breed of cattle.

**CARLOS FRANQUI (SPANISH):** Cuba was going to produce more cheese than Switzerland, more meat than France, more milk...so many things, that I think that man believed them because Fidel Castro believe his own words. And that's the most dangerous thing.

**NARRATOR:** As one project faltered, Castro moved on to the next, always looking for "the silver bullet." Finally, he turned to sugar, Cuba's traditional crop. And staked his reputation on producing 10 million tons of sugar in 1970.

**FIDEL CASTRO:** And we've already said not one pound less than the 10 million. That's the problem -- and it needs to be addressed and corrected. And it would be an incredible embarrassment if we were to fall short of the 10 million.

**JORGE DOMINGUEZ:** The idea was, in effect, to double the size of the country's, uh, sugar harvest and it meant turning Cuba upside down.

**NARRATOR:** Everyone was mobilized: factory workers, students, housewives; volunteers came from all over the world. Vietnam, North Korea, the United States. But no matter how hard Fidel swung his machete, or how often he called on others to give their best, Cubans could not turn his dream into reality.

**JORGE DOMINGUEZ:** Instead of ten million, eight and a half million metric tons of sugar were produced in 1970. It was nonetheless the largest sugar harvest in Cuban history. But it was a failure because the goal was not achieved and because Cuban resources were destroyed and because the country, instead of free, powerful and independent, was in a state of virtual collapse.

**ARCHIVAL FILM -- FIDEL:** (captioned) I am not going to beat around the bush. For me, like any other Cuban, this is a very difficult moment. Perhaps more difficult than any other experience in our revolutionary struggle.

**NARRATOR:** The Soviet Union stepped in. Fidel would no longer be allowed to run the economy from his jeep. A powerful Council of Ministers would make all major decisions in concert with the Soviet bloc. Ten thousand Soviet advisors would lend a hand.

**BRIAN LATELL:** Castro presided over the revolution's essential capitulation to, uh, to Soviet demands. Organizational demands, structural demands, foreign policy demands. And perhaps one of the hardest things for Castro to accept was that he agreed to stop criticizing the Soviet Union in any fashion, direct or veiled criticism.

**NARRATOR:** Delighted, Moscow rewarded Cuba with subsidies of up to 6 billion dollars per year.

**ARCHIVAL FILM -- BREZHNEV:** Viva Cuba!