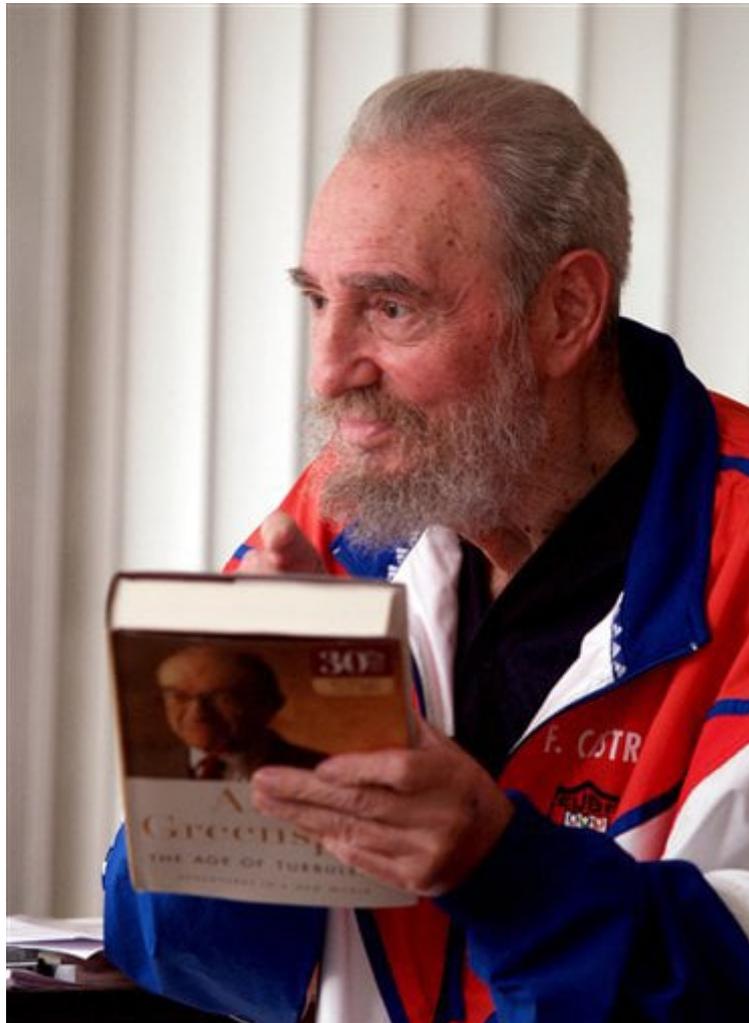


# Fidel Castro's Scheming

by Richard Kostelanetz



Rarely is a photograph worth a thousand words, but one that knocked me out several years ago showed Fidel Castro, visibly aged, clutching a copy of a new book in English by none other than Alan Greenspan.

Note that in his hands is AG, not Martha Stewart, Carl Woodward, or Stephen King. No one could have imagined this photo-op before the fact—not even Greenspan's mainland publisher.

Since *The Age of Turbulence* had only recently appeared, the photograph, made during an interview on Cuban television, was meant to illustrate that Fidel was not only alive and well in

the autumn of 2007 when the Greenspan book was published, but lucid enough to read not just his native Spanish but English. (Don't forget that he and his first wife honeymooned for weeks in New York City.) Did this photo also illustrate implicitly that Fidel, a monumental economic dummy, had finally wised up?

As I've written before (reprinted in my *Toward Secession*), so dumb was Castro about real money that he never conned celebrity-conscious American book publishers into giving him a whopping advance for "How To Survive as a Dictator for Nearly Fifty Years." (Rafael Trujillo, remember, lasted only thirty years before he was deposed.) For ghost-written revelations in English, Castro could have gotten millions (in very hard currency) that, in another photo-op, he could have donated to his cheering country. And he could have earned yet more from an American book tour, speaking the English he has always known.

[One book appearing since, *Fidel Castro: My Life* (2008) consists of under-edited interviews conducted by a Spanish journalist and scrupulously rendered into English "as though it was, in fact, a legal deposition," according to its translator. Tedious beyond belief, this *My Life* lacks the compelling narrative that an experienced American ghost could have provided. It incidentally includes on page 671 the transcript of a letter that young Fidel wrote in English to President Franklin D. Roosevelt.]

On another hand, consider that the ulterior motive behind this Fidel photo might be portraying Cuba's FAE (First Among Equals), the formally retired chairman of the board, as calculating how to sell Cuba to Wall Street. Interpreting the photograph closely, as a CIA veteran would any enemy document, let me suggest that Fidel was contemplating how to issue common stock in a conglomerate called Cuba, Inc. that, in the tradition of banana-republic corporations, would own everything in the country that it could. He knows as well as I that this IPO (Initial Public Offering) would succeed

especially with those familiar with Cubans' reputation for being more competent than other Caribbeans.

Unlikely though this scenario seems at first, remember that you read it here first.

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Nearly two decades ago, I had a girl friend who worked at MBIA, the municipal bond insurance company that had developed a highly successful racket of credit enhancement, if paid fully in advance. Nonetheless, she privately thought her bosses "dumb white boys who will screw up," as indeed they did, notwithstanding superior educations and smug self-confidence.

I was reminded of her judgment when I saw a photograph reproducing the faces of sixty-two early Cuban guerrillas who died before Fidel took power. Nearly all of them were white; a few were brown; none were black. That's none. The revolutionaries advocating a society of equals, regardless of race or social class at birth, were scarcely a reflection of the Cuba population, or indeed the population of nearly every country in North or South America!

Needless to say, the survivors running Cuba since 1959 have been a bunch of white boys who have screwed up. Were Cuba merged into MBIA, no one outside would recognize any racial difference.