

DR. MANUEL FRANCISCO ARTIME BUESA BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Manuel Francisco Artime Buesa is best known for his role as the Civil Leader of Brigade 2506 during the Bay of Pigs Invasion, the CIA-sponsored invasion of Cuba that ended tragically after three days. But a single moment in history does not define a man, nor does it characterize his life-long commitment to a free and democratic Cuba, to helping the poor and caring for the sick. Artime was a humanitarian, a physician, a poet, and an anticommunist revolutionary who left this world all too soon. It is our hope that the center that bears his name will serve as a lasting tribute to his spirit of optimism, to the belief that change is possible and that freedom is a human right worth fighting for.

Manuel Francisco Artime Buesa was born in Moron, Camaguey on January 29, 1932. His father, Manuel Felipe Artime, was an accountant who left Spain during their Civil War. His mother, Otilia Buesa, was a pharmacist and a cousin to the renowned Cuban poet Jose Angel Buesa. The family settled in Esmeralda, Cuba when Artime was six. As a schoolboy, Artime was singled out as a gifted student and writer, with an uncanny ability to inspire those around him with his passionate oratory skills. He was also naturally empathetic, and after the tragic loss of his only brother at a young age, he became interested in medicine and helping the sick.

As a teenager, Artime moved to Havana and attended Colegio Baldor, earning a bachelor's degree in science. He later graduated from the University of Havana as a Doctor of Medicine, specializing in psychiatry and donating his free time to care for leprosy victims who had been hospitalized in the outskirts of the city. It was at the University of Havana that Artime became involved in politics. He joined the University Catholic Group (ACU) in Havana, a Jesuit-run organization that encouraged Artime to pursue his humanitarian and political interests.

Artime's passion for Cuba and politics drew him to the revolutionary climate at the University of Havana during the 1950s. He became involved in the struggle against the military dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, eventually joining Fidel Castro's forces in the Sierra Maestra Mountains in 1958, attaining the rank of first lieutenant in the rebel army.

After Castro's victory in 1959, Artime was promoted to Chief of Development Zone "0-22" in Manzanillo, which included a large part of Oriente Province. It was during this time that he participated in various conferences with Agrarian Reform personnel and discerned for the first time Castro's plans to abandon Cuban democracy and deliver Cuba to Russian communism. In October of 1959, his suspicions were confirmed at a secret meeting with Cuba's new leaders

(Fidel Castro; Nunez Jimenez, Director of Agrarian Reform; and Che Guevara). Artime immediately and publicly denounced Castro as a Communist and began to organize anti-Castro groups, which later became the Revolutionary Recovery Movement (MRR). As a result of these subversive activities, Artime was tenaciously pursued by Castro's secret police.

In December of 1959, with the help of the CIA, the Revolutionary Recovery Movement sent Artime abroad to obtain much-needed aid to encourage and support a rebellion within Cuba. In Mexico, he wrote his first book titled *Treason*, explaining how the communists were preparing to take total control of Cuba. Artime then traveled throughout Latin America, promoting anti-Castro activities and propaganda and searching for bases from which to launch an invasion against Castro and his Communist regime. The result was the establishment of several training camps, including a base in Guatemala which was used as the headquarters and training area for Assault Brigade 2506. With assistance from the C.I.A., a broader anti-Castro organization was created, the Cuban Revolutionary Council (CRC).

On April 17, 1961, Artime landed at the Bay of Pigs as Civil Chief of the Cuban forces, made up of a 1200-man Brigade. Lacking the promised U.S. air support and facing 60,000 troops, Brigade leaders gave the order to disperse. Artime eluded Castro's military for 14 days and nights in the Ciénaga de Zapata swamp, which surrounds the Bay of Pigs. He was finally captured and imprisoned for 20 months, eight of them in solitary confinement. On the walls of his prison cell, he wrote and later memorized his second book, *War Marches and Prison Songs*, in which he immortalized the epic and tragic struggle of the Brigade at Giron Beach. On December 24, 1962, the United States exchanged more than \$53 million worth of food and medicine as ransom for 1,100 Brigade fighters captured during the invasion. Artime and his comrades were freed and sent to the United States. He was never allowed to go back to Cuba or see his parents again.

In exile, Dr. Artime continued to push for vigorous action against Castro. He became involved in the Cuban project AMWORLD, a White House-sponsored and CIA-organized military unit with bases in Costa Rica and Nicaragua that staged commando raids on Cuban shore installations. However, in 1965 the Cuban project was cancelled by US President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Despite the setback, Artime never gave up his dream of a free and democratic Cuba, even as he established himself in the United States. On July 13, 1964, he married Adelaida Padron

Cruz and started a family. He also opened his own medical practice in Miami, but Cuba always beckoned. Through his leadership and relentless pursuit of freedom and democracy for his homeland, he became a symbol of hope for the Cuban exile community.

At age 45, Artime was finishing another book of poetry titled *Catharsis* about the Cuban exile experience. He was preparing to open a second doctor's office in Miami to help low-income families and was a proud, albeit busy, father to six children. It was at this time that Artime was faced with his next battle, the diagnosis of an aggressive and fatal cancer. He lost his life a month later, on November 17, 1977, at the very same hospital where he had worked to cure so many others. It was a devastating and tragic loss for the Cuban exile community and Artime's loved ones. Thousands attended his funeral, laying to rest a great Cuban patriot and revolutionary, a talented doctor and poet, and a beloved husband and father.

Manuel Artime will never be forgotten. He inspired hope in the thousands of Cubans who believed in him and what he represented. Today, we remember him for his actions and words, his never-ending devotion to a free Cuba, and the bravery with which he lived his life and confronted adversity.

PARA EL QUE VIVE LA VIDA
TENIENDO EN CUENTA LA MUERTE,
LA MUERTE NO LE ES TEMIDA;
PORQUE, CUANDO DE ESTA SUERTE
LA MUERTA ACABA SU VIDA:
GANA LA VIDA, EN LA MUERTE !

-Manuel Artime

"In this absurd world there are two types of men; men of "light" and men of "shadows." The second is made of tyrants, those whose hands are stained with gold and blood, those who leave misery and death in their paths. Of the first class are men of goodwill. The heroes, the patriots, men of God, the valiant. Those who before injustice forget their own sorrows and march for life, destroying chains. Cuba was taken by men of shadows, men who brought hunger and pain. Righteousness was beaten with bayonets; hatred divided our Country into pieces, and out of this arose a group of men, not just men of "light" but men of the "sun."

-Manuel Artime