

## Ex-Castro Man Revisits Cuba

### Fort Lauderdale

An American who served as a soldier in Fidel Castro's military campaign of the 1950s and just returned from a three-week visit of Communist Cuba says he is satisfied with the results of the revolution.

Donald B. Soldini, 36, now a Fort Lauderdale real estate executive, said that "politics aside, the revolution we helped to make has transformed the lives of the poor.

"They are the main beneficiaries," Soldini said. "Everything else is secondary, as far as I'm concerned."

Soldini, a native of Staten Island, N.Y., first went to Cuba in 1957 as an idealistic 18-year-old who believed that Castro was "either crazy or a winner." He quickly got into trouble with the Fulgencio Batista government, which Castro was trying to overthrow, and was deported.

Upon his return to the United States, he became a propagandist for the Castro rebels, releasing Sastrista leaflets from the top of Yankee Stadium and placing a 26th of July flag — the Castro movement's banner — on the Statue of Liberty.

Later that year, he returned to Cuba and eventu-

ally became a lieutenant in the revolutionary army fighting out of the Sierra Maestra mountains. He was wounded once and imprisoned twice.

He was with Castro when the rebel leader rode triumphantly into Havana in January 1959 after Batista fled.

"I went back there on a strictly personal visit to see for myself what was really happening," the chubby, well-to-do entrepreneur said in an interview in his office here.

"I don't care about the politics of the thing and I never have. That's why I left there in 1959 after Fidel took over."

Soldini was granted permission for the trip by both the Castro regime and the U.S. State Department. He met with a number of government officials, he said, but spent most of the time in the interior of the country visiting rural villages, schools, hospitals, old battle sites and old friends.

"I was very much impressed with what has been done," he said.

"I came back convinced that this country definitely ought to lift the economic blockade because it has created nothing but animosity.

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