

FINDING FIDEL

The Journey of Erik Durschmied

A Feature Documentary by Bay Weyman

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Short synopsis:

Finding Fidel tells the remarkable story of war cameraman Erik Durschmied, and his 1958 journey to the Sierra Maestra mountains of Cuba, to interview the little-known rebel leader before he came to power. Featuring never seen archival footage, the film reflects on the lost promise of Castro's Revolution, the hinge of fate, and the power of media in both men's lives.

Long synopsis:

Finding Fidel tells the remarkable story of war cameraman Erik Durschmied, who in 1958 journeyed to Cuba's Sierra Maestra mountains to interview a little-known rebel leader named Fidel Castro. A month later, Castro's band of fighters rolled into Havana, and the world would never be the same.

Intercutting Durschmied's reflections on the lost promise of Castro's Revolution with his rarely-seen interview with the young Fidel, award winning filmmaker Bay Weyman explores the hinge of fate, the vagaries of history, and the power of media in both men's lives.

Durschmied spent weeks in Castro's guerrilla headquarters, filming fascinating scenes of camp life with the rebels, and conducting the only known English-language interview with Fidel from the period just before he came to power. The interview is a unique time capsule, vividly depicting Castro's early views, his struggle against the dictator Batista, and his goals for the Revolution.

"There is no Communism or Marxism in our idea," Fidel insists. "Our political philosophy is representative democracy and social justice in a well-planned economy."

Finding Fidel follows Durschmied as he returns to Cuba on the 50th Anniversary of the Revolution, retracing his original route to the mountains after an ailing Fidel has handed power over to his brother Raul and the island is waiting for change. Durschmied tells the true story behind his interviews with Fidel, and of the future dictator's consummate use of the media to control his message and create his image. The daring young cameraman brought Castro's message to the world just as Havana fell, and as a result his career took off. Journeying to hot spots around the world, he spent decades filming for the BBC, CBS and CBC in war zones from Vietnam and Cambodia to the Congo, Afghanistan and Iraq. He describes his work as a war cameraman, reflecting on the meaning and the burden of a career chronicling history.

Though he has witnessed many of the major events of our times, for Durschmied the interview on a mountaintop in Cuba remains the most meaningful. As he returns to Castro's camp in the Sierra Maestra, he finds an unexpected touchstone that marks the beginning and end of the journey.

At its core, **Finding Fidel** is a story of one man's destiny. Durschmied's interview with Fidel was the turning point in his career - "the hinge that decides history, decides battles, and decides also a man's life... He used me as his media to reach the world, and I in the same way used him to set me off on the career of a lifetime." **Finding Fidel** is a multi-layered personal journey in time and memory. The journey of Erik Durschmied. What's 50 years in a man's life?