

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

CUBA

A HISTORY OF LATIN
AMERICA FROM THE
BEGINNING TO THE
PRESENT
by HUBERT HERZING
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1963.

THE LUSH charms of the "Pearl of the Antilles" have been fully reported by delighted tourists, of whom Columbus was the first. Nothing but pleasant things can fairly be said of this fruitful island which stretches west to east some 760 miles but measures barely 100 miles at its widest, with its broken 2,000-mile coastline and fine harbors, with its rolling plains, dense forests, and mountains rising to more than 8,000 feet.

Cuba's population of about 6,500,000 is an amalgam of many peoples. The full-blooded Indian has long since disappeared, leaving no more than a glint in the eye of the modern Cuban. The first of the foreign invaders were the Spaniards who came in search of gold and plantations, and occupied the island after the beginning of the sixteenth century. Next came Negro slaves, about a million of whom were brought in during the colonial period to work the sugar fields. French and British buccaneers attacked the island from time to time, and in 1762-63 a British force occupied Havana. French refugees, fleeing Negro revolts in Haiti after 1790, settled in Cuba. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Cuba attracted many thousands of migrants from Spain, but few from other European countries. Chinese and other Orientals entered illegally and stayed. Today's population is a blend of all these peoples. Exact racial analysis of Cuba's population is impossible, but we may guess that roughly one-fourth of the people are Negro, one-half white and mostly Spanish, and one-fourth a mixture of European, Negro, and Oriental. "The vast blend of races and cultures," writes the Cuban Fernando Ortiz, "overshadows in importance every other historical phenomenon."

Cuba's history, earlier shaped as a colony of Spain, has for a century been determined by two all-powerful forces: one economic, the depend

ence upon sugar; the other international, the preponderance of the United States, whose Florida Keys are only ninety miles from Havana.

Economically, sugar has ruled the island. The tobacco crop, long important, has declined to a poor second place. The island is the chief vendor of cane sugar in the world market, and its economic and social health has risen and fallen with the fluctuating price of that commodity. The culture of sugar cane, begun in Cuba in the 1520's, created great plantations, prompted the importation of Negro slaves, furnished profit to the Spanish Crown, and attracted marauders. The nineteenth century brought increase in production: in 1817 the output was about 70,000 short tons; in 1894, over a million. With independence and the influx of American capital in the twentieth century, the sugar crop reached an average of 5,400,000 short tons in the years 1925-29, declined to a low of 2,500,000 in 1934, and increased to almost 8,000,000 in 1952. Four-fifths or more of Cuba's export revenue is from sugar. There has been no lack of warning against the island's monoculture. In 1883 the Cuban hero José Martí wrote: "A people commits suicide the day on which it bases its existence on a single crop," and Cuban experience confirms his wisdom. When world demand is lively and the price is high, the Cuban treasury is filled, businessmen sell goods, and almost everyone eats. When markets contract and prices fall, distress is general. Sugar makes and breaks presidents, dictates the life of every citizen. There was prosperity during World War I when the price was pegged at 5.5 cents a pound, feverish speculation in 1920 when it briefly touched 22.5 cents, dismay by the end of 1920 when it dropped to 3.75 cents, a long period of doldrums in the 1920's and early 1930's when the price tottered and finally fell to a new low of .57 cents a pound in June, 1932. Strict production controls, international marketing agreements, and United States quota arrangements have since steadied the price, which stood in 1953 at about 4 cents a pound.

resources Although sugar dominates, Cuba has rich resources scarcely tapped: 3,500,000 acres of fine forests, substantial deposits of iron, copper, nickel, and manganese. Tobacco, best in the world for cigars, furnishes about 7 per cent of the export revenue.

Spain's "Ever Faithful Isle"

While the wars for Spanish American independence swept from Mexico to Argentina between 1810 and 1824, only Cuba and Puerto Rico remained faithful to the Iberian motherland. A few lonely Cuban dissenters were easily silenced. The masters of land and trade were loyal Spaniards, and their ranks were augmented by royalist refugees from Mexico and Gran Colombia. Cuba's insular position and the presence of strong Spanish

garrisons blocked intervention by Simón Bolívar's forces. Cuba indeed had grounds for complaint against Spain, and these increased as the homeland floundered under reactionary Ferdinand VII, inept Isabella II, and the weaklings who followed. Colonial rule grew more incompetent and tyrannical, stifling the island's economy. It must be noted in retrospect, however, that Cuba prospered during the first half of the nineteenth century, thanks chiefly to the enlarging market for her wares in the United States. But *la isla siempre leal*, variously abused and neglected, grew less faithful as the century progressed.

While the Spanish flag still flew over Havana's Morro Castle, there was early evidence of the interest of the United States in the island. The northern republic was still young when, in 1803, her sense of Manifest Destiny was intensified by the bargain-purchase of Louisiana and the Mississippi Valley. The annexation of the Floridas in 1821 whetted the taste for expansion, and the conviction grew that Cuba must some day be included in the American nation. The sentiment of many United States leaders was expressed by John Quincy Adams in 1823: "There are laws of political as well as of physical gravitation, and if an apple, severed by the tempest from its native tree, cannot choose but fall to the ground, Cuba, forcibly disjoined from its own unnatural connection with Spain and incapable of self-support, can gravitate only toward the North American Union, which, by the same law of nature, cannot cast her off from its bosom."¹

Such American ambition aroused England's Foreign Minister George Canning to warn the American minister in London in 1825: "You cannot allow that we should have Cuba. And we cannot allow that you should have it. And we can neither of us allow that it should fall into the hands of France." In 1852 England and France proposed that the United States join them in disclaiming "now and for hereafter, all intention to obtain possession of the island of Cuba," but Washington refused to tie its hands. In 1853 President Franklin Pierce instructed his minister in Madrid to buy Cuba, if he could, at a top price of \$130,000,000. When Spain angrily rejected this offer, the United States minister to Spain, in concert with his colleagues, the American ministers in France and England, issued the Ostend Manifesto, which announced American intention either to buy Cuba or to take it "without the consent of Spain." That fantastic document, exciting ridicule in European chancelleries, was promptly repudiated by Washington. Within the United States, up to the outbreak of the Civil War, the debate over Cuban annexation was complicated by the slavery issue, as Southerners hoped to add the island as another slave state.

Meanwhile, Cubans were talking of independence. An eloquent herald of the coming struggle was Narciso López, a Venezuelan who had

¹ Adams to Nelson, April 28, 1823. *House Executive Documents*, 32nd Congress, 1st session, No. 121 (serial 648), p. 7.

fought under the Spanish flag against Bolívar, then in the Carlist Wars in Spain, and had finally moved to Cuba where he shifted to the patriot side against the mother country. Fleeing the police in Cuba, López took refuge in the United States and from there organized three quixotic invasions of the island in 1848, 1850, and 1851; López himself was caught and hanged as a traitor.

In 1868 young Cubans met secretly on a plantation and drafted *el grito de Yara*, which called for the island's independence and marked the beginning of the Ten Years' War (1868-78), a contest between Spain's troops and the poorly armed guerrillas which cost not less than 200,000 lives and some \$700,000,000 in property loss. This seemingly futile war, however, fixed the determination of Cubans to be free, trained thousands of young men in defense of their country, and produced heroes whose names are great in the island's history—the mulatto Antonio Maceo, the Dominican Máximo Gómez, and Calixto García. In the final settlement Spain, now in the hands of more sensible rulers, promised administrative reforms, amnesty for rebels, and emancipation of all slaves. The pledge on slavery was fulfilled in 1886, but the other promises proved chimerical. Colonial rulers continued to be highhanded and feckless. And, most eloquent of all arguments, Spanish rule was bad for business. By this time the island's economy depended largely on marketing its tobacco and sugar in the United States. Spain imposed new taxes and restrictions and finally in 1894 arbitrarily canceled the trade agreement between the islanders and the Americans. The results were disastrous: Cuban sales to the United States declined from \$89,000,000 in 1889 to \$56,000,000 in 1897—a loss partly explained by the depression of 1894 in the United States. Such losses persuaded Cuban businessmen that the hour had indeed come for *Cuba libre*.

The war for Cuban independence, which broke in 1895, was the continuation of the Ten Years' War. A government-in-exile had been maintained in New York, headed by Tomás Estrada Palma and aided by other expatriates. Most tireless of these was José Martí, poet and journalist, affectionately remembered by his countrymen as "the apostle." Born in Havana in 1853, Martí early joined the revolutionists, and at sixteen he was jailed and served on a chain gang. Then followed years of exile in Mexico, Guatemala, and Spain. Returning to Cuba after the Ten Years' War, he was again banished to Spain for his outspoken criticism. In 1888 he found refuge in New York, where he worked to enlist his countrymen, to win friends among the Americans, and to raise money for guns and powder. More than any other Cuban, Martí helped to create the atmosphere which later prompted American intervention.

In 1895 there were uprisings of patriots in eastern Cuba, inspired and armed by the New York junta. Martí, Maceo, and Gómez landed with recruits gathered in the United States, Mexico, Central America, and the

Caribbean islands. Martí was one of the first to be killed in battle; but arms and men continued to reach the island, as some sixty volunteer expeditions eluded the neutral American authorities. The army of emancipation scored initial successes and seemed about to push on to Havana itself. Then Spain bestirred herself, ousted incompetent officers, and appointed General Valeriano Weyler commander in chief, who quickly earned himself the epithet of "Butcher." He immediately herded several hundred thousand men, women, and children into concentration camps (*reconcentrados*), where bad and inadequate food and lack of sanitation brought death to many thousands—some fifty thousand in Havana province alone. Crops and cattle in disaffected areas were systematically destroyed in order to starve out the patriots, who retaliated by burning Spanish-owned sugar plantations. By the end of 1896 the tide had turned against the revolutionists, and within a few months Weyler had driven them back to the eastern end of the island. The battle for liberty seemed lost, but the United States was to have the last word.

The forces provoking American intervention were various. Some were economic: Americans had invested money in sugar, had drawn profit from Cuban trade, and wanted more. The shrinking of the United States' industrial profits in the early 1890's prompted expansion of foreign markets, lessened enthusiasm for the traditional isolationism, and gave impetus to the idea that the nation must assert its place among world powers. There was a strategic motive: the leaders in Washington had already decided on an isthmian canal and thought it unwise to leave Spain in control of the island which dominated the Caribbean. Other motives were humanitarian: the public deplored the savagery with which the Cuban patriots were treated. The American press fanned the flames; in New York, Joseph Pulitzer's *World* and William Randolph Hearst's American seized upon the Cuban imbroglio as ammunition in their campaigns for selling papers. Unscrupulous reporters vied in invention of Spanish atrocities and gave only scant attention to Spain's recall of Weyler in late 1897, the ending of the *reconcentrados*, and the offer of home rule to Cuba.

Early 1898 brought the rival editors fresh material for arousing the American electorate. Hearst published a personal letter written by the Spanish minister in Washington, describing President William McKinley as "weak, a pot-house politician, catering to the rabble." On February 15 the U.S.S. *Maine*, anchored in the harbor of Havana to protect American citizens in case of emergency, blew up with the loss of 266 American seamen. What happened to that warship is still unclear. A United States Naval inquiry fixed blame upon a submarine bomb but did not declare its source. A Spanish investigation charged the accident to internal explosion. Some commentators argued, without evidence, that Cuban patriots had blown up the battleship in order to provoke intervention. But the cry "Remember the *Maine*!" echoed across the land, with newsmen beating

the tom-toms, and on April 11 McKinley laid the case before Congress and called for armed intervention—despite last-minute word from Madrid that the Spanish government was ready to accept almost any peaceful settlement.

The war was brief, glorious, and inexpensive. American forces on land and sea expelled Spain from Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. And Cuba was free, under the tutelage of the United States which had pledged its word (by the Teller Amendment of April, 1898) that she had no "intention to exercise sovereignty, jurisdiction, or control over said island except for the pacification thereof, and asserts its determination, when that is accomplished, to leave the government and control of the Island to its people." This pledge, incorporated in the Treaty of Paris (December 10, 1898), was regarded by skeptical European statesmen as an amiable but empty promise. Sensible nations, they said, do not abandon conquered lands, especially lands as rich as Cuba.

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American Military Rule, 1898-1902

The United States army, charged with pacifying and organizing Cuba, had task enough. Fields lay in weeds, houses and sugar mills were gutted, and tens of thousands were homeless and starving. Of the three million cattle at pasture in 1895, scarcely one-tenth had survived. Public business was at a standstill, courts and police forces were not functioning, and the departing Spaniards had stripped island offices—not a single centavo stamp was left in the post office tills. Bandits ruled country roads. The patriot army was ragged and hungry, and had grown by twenty thousand men after the shooting was over.

After a brief administration by John R. Brooke, the office of Military Governor was filled by Dr. Leonard Wood, a thirty-nine-year-old army surgeon who had shared the martial adventures of Colonel Theodore Roosevelt and his Rough Riders, and who combined sound discipline with a lively imagination, traits which later made him effective in the Philippines. "Wood," writes Russell Fitzgibbon, "will undoubtedly rank as one of the great colonial administrators in history, comparable to Britain's Curzon and France's Lyautey."

The Army's housekeeping was thorough. A census taken in 1899 reported a population of 1,572,845, of whom 185,393 were born in Spain. Food and clothing were furnished to thousands of families. A rural police was organized. The patriot army was disbanded, its members sharing a three-million-dollar bonus from the American treasury. Courts, municipal governments, and customs services were reorganized. Prisons were cleaned up and many political prisoners released. The Church, many of whose

properties had been seized or damaged, was propitiated by a settlement of almost a million dollars. Landholders were aided in getting their fields into cultivation, and sugar production increased rapidly. Cattle were imported and sold on easy terms to farmers. Harbors were dredged and docks built. Highway and railroad projects were begun. Public schools, almost nonexistent under Spain, increased in number. The University of Havana, founded by the Dominicans in the eighteenth century but moribund during the nineteenth, was reopened under the revered Enrique José Varona.

The most spectacular benefit was the extirpation of yellow fever, which had been a scourge for four centuries and since 1855 had caused an average of 751 deaths a year in Havana alone. Thanks to the American Walter Reed, the Cuban Carlos Finlay, and other physicians, the offending species of mosquito was identified and its breeding places cleared out. Within three years the disease was virtually eliminated.

Despite the brilliant success of Leonard Wood's rule, there was popular clamor for American withdrawal. Many landholders, however, including influential Spaniards, feared anarchy if American troops were removed and favored outright annexation to the American Union. But the Cuban people had been promised national independence and the majority would be content with nothing less. In 1900 Wood, under orders from Washington, announced the election of an assembly to draft a constitution for the government into whose hands he could transfer his authority. While this body was framing the new instrument of state, communications from Washington laid down some American demands.

Washington's stipulations for an independent Cuba, delivered to the constitutional assembly, were in the form of the Platt Amendment. This famous document, largely drafted by Elihu Root and adopted by the American Congress, was designed to place such limits upon the island republic's activities as to make her a safe and tractable neighbor. Under its terms the Cuban government was limited in its power to make treaties with foreign nations and in its freedom to contract public debts; it was pledged to continue the campaign against "epidemic and infectious" diseases; it promised "coaling or naval stations" to the United States; and it left the final disposition of the Isle of Pines, an island of 1182 square miles off the southwestern coast, to later decision. The most galling provision, and the one which clearly described Cuba as a protectorate of the United States, read: "Cuba consents that the United States may exercise the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence, the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty." Washington's demand that the Amendment be incorporated into the Cuban constitution was denounced by the assembly as final proof of American insincerity, but all attempts to soften its terms were rejected. The Cubans yielded and added the Amendment to the constitution which was adopted in June, 1901.

Thus the road was cleared for the election of a president. The first choice was clearly the honored hero of two wars, General Máximo Gómez, but he refused with the words: "Men of war, for war . . . and those of peace, for peace." The choice then fell to Tomás Estrada Palma, of long service in the independence cause. In May, 1902, Governor Wood turned over the government to the President, and sailed with his aides for New York. There was general rejoicing, although cautious men shook their heads with foreboding, saying that the Americans had left too soon.

The Republic Under the Platt Amendment, 1902-34

Cuba was now free—but not free to make her own mistakes. That was the meaning implicit in the Platt Amendment, under whose protection, or threat, Cuba lived for thirty-two years. The rereading of the record suggests a clear lesson on the education of nations, as of children: that none learns to order its life unless granted the privilege of going wrong as well as of going right. In Cuba's case, the well-meant policy of the United States imposed a split personality on the presidents of the newborn republic, who were under bond to serve two masters, the Cuban electorate, and the government in Washington. In the futile effort to propitiate both masters, they could please neither.

Yet the republic got off to a good start under the new president. Sixty-seven and robust, incorruptible and devoted, Estrada Palma in his first term (1902-06) gave grounds for faith in Cuba's future.² He won a reciprocal trade treaty from the United States in 1903, under which Cuban sugar was given a 20 per cent reduction in tariff duties—an arrangement which, with some modifications, still prevails. Such a favorable advantage stimulated a rapid increase in sugar production. He also persuaded Washington to renounce its claim to an indefinite number of coaling and naval bases and to be content with Guantánamo Bay and one lesser site, which was relinquished in 1912. In domestic matters Estrada Palma was beset by greedy generals and patriots-for-profit who opposed his efforts to abolish the standing army, fought his economy measures calling for reduction of civil employees, and undermined his efforts to improve municipal administration. In the face of such opposition Estrada Palma developed a surprising degree of honesty and efficiency in public servants, reduced graft in the army, enlarged the public school system, and increased the treasury balance from the mere \$689,000 inherited from Leonard Wood's administration to \$25,000,000 by 1906.

The year 1906 brought the first test for the Platt Amendment.

² But most Cubans still regard Estrada Palma with disfavor, charging him with excess of zeal for serving the United States.

Estrada Palma had been re-elected for another four-year term in a contest in which his "Moderate" party and his "Liberal" opponents were both guilty of fraud. Within a few months after the election, the Liberals, led by José Miguel Gómez and Alfredo Zayas, provoked a revolution which spread over the island. There was little shooting—it was more "a war of bulletins than of bullets"—but it offered Estrada Palma an excuse to appeal for help to President Theodore Roosevelt. The American president sent William Howard Taft to persuade the quarreling Cubans to compose their differences. When that pacific effort failed, Roosevelt—appealing to the Platt Amendment—named Charles Magoon, a Nebraska lawyer, as governor to supplant the elected president. The awkward but assiduous Magoon quieted the stormy contestants, enforced some measures of reform upon public administration, and supervised a reasonably honest election which gave the presidency to José Miguel Gómez in 1909. Magoon then withdrew.³

Scrutiny of Cuban politics after 1909 makes sorry reading. There was increased venality in public offices, betrayal of trust by presidents, resort to violence by disaffected factions, and finally, gross rule by violence. Washington intervened time and again, sometimes by sending a battleship, landing marines, or appointing an "adviser"; more often by a discreet warning delivered to the Cuban president by the American ambassador.

José Miguel Gómez (1909-13) was indubitably popular. "In all my life," he confided, "I have been jovial in spirit, with a smile on my lips." With a smile Gómez emptied the treasury and allowed Cuban and American cronies to fatten on concessions. His successor, Mario García Menocal (1913-21), a graduate of Cornell University, seemed a happier choice, but he too succumbed to the infection of easy money for himself and his friends. His fraudulent re-election in 1917 provoked a revolt which was put down by a brief visit of American troops. When the United States declared war on Germany in 1917, Menocal's congress obediently did the same. Concurrent with the accession of Alfredo Zayas (1921-25), Cuba was caught in the postwar collapse in sugar prices; local banks were closing their doors, the national treasury was empty, and the new president's rule by plunder offered no hope for the citizens. Meanwhile, President Woodrow Wilson had devised a new and, it was hoped, less painful form of intervention. In January, 1921, while Menocal was still in office, General Enoch Crowder had been sent by Washington as an adviser without formal diplomatic status. Zayas was forced to accept Crowder with what grace he could summon. For two years Crowder dictated cuts in the budget, uncovered crooked contracts, and finally imposed an "honest cabinet"; this last step was the price for Washington's consent to a \$50,000,000 loan from a New

³ Magoon is a target for abuse by Cuban writers, who have called him "gross . . . rude . . . he falls like a buzzard on the Treasury of Cuba, and devours it." Such charges are unsubstantiated. Magoon was honest and reasonably efficient. See Charles E. Chapman: *A History of the Cuban Republic*. New York: The Macmillan Co.; 1927, Ch. X.

York bank. Crowder's work, heatedly denounced by most Cuban historians, wrought a considerable recovery. In 1923 he was named American ambassador, and the painless intervention was theoretically over. Zayas, now feeling strong enough to play his own hand, dismissed the "honest cabinet," named his own cronies to principal posts, and reverted to the shady practices temporarily blocked by Crowder.

The next president, Gerardo Machado (1925-33), was welcomed by solid citizens, who said he was a businessman and would bring order out of chaos. His first measures were reassuring. He launched a successful campaign for crop diversification, a needed corrective to the treacherous dependence upon sugar. He encouraged mineral production and expansion of industry. Drawing upon the easy loans which New York banks were pressing upon all Latin American governments in the 1920's, Machado began numerous public works—some useful but expensive, such as the 700-mile highway from end to end of the island; and some foolish, such as the \$20,000,000 marble capitol.

Meanwhile, evidence accumulated that Machado, despite an increase in governmental efficiency, was not averse to making a profit for himself and his favorites. Inevitably attacked by his political rivals, he created a personal political machine more effective than any his predecessors had devised. He secured the obedience of congress by passing out *colecturias* (agencies) for the National Lottery, each worth two or three thousand dollars per month to the lucky holder. While imposing unwonted honesty upon minor officials, he rewarded his inner circle with handsome incomes from concessions and contracts. By 1928, when he was re-elected, the opposition was noisy and determined. Students organized demonstrations against him, whereupon he closed the University. Students and professional men organized the ABC, a society with thirty to forty thousand members, and there ensued a contest in terror. Machado's gunmen, the *porristas*, shot down students in the streets and invaded private homes without warrant. The ABC collected machine guns, operated a secret radio for the taunting of the dictator, and even dropped a bomb on the national palace.

The Cuban tyranny presented an unpleasant dilemma to the Herbert Hoover administration. Intervention was the obvious solution, but Washington had learned the futility of that course. Nonintervention, the course elected, incited angry denunciation from Cubans and many Americans. Harry Guggenheim, Hoover's ambassador, could urge Machado to be decent, but he could not enforce his requests—and was noisily damned by American liberals. Such was the deadlock in 1933 when Franklin D. Roosevelt became president. In May astute Sumner Welles was sent as ambassador with instructions to apply discreet pressure to effect a change. Emboldened by Washington's support, the ABC and other opposition groups became more active, and in August they called a general strike.

Business was at a standstill, and the army demanded a change. On August 12 Machado took a plane for the Bahamas, and the Havana mobs looted the homes of "the butcher" and his friends. Order was quickly restored by a provisional government headed by respected Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, but this new regime, "made in Washington," was only twenty-one days old when it was overthrown by "the sergeants' revolt." This was led by Sergeant Fulgencio Batista, who, after deposing almost five hundred of his superior officers and naming his fellow conspirators to their places, promoted himself to the grade of colonel and chief of staff and became overnight the most powerful man on the island. Batista appointed Ramón Grau San Martín, physician and university professor, as provisional president. Grau's government, refused recognition by Washington, lasted but four months.

The fall of Machado marked the end of an era for Cuba. The one lesson thoroughly learned by Washington was the futility of the Platt Amendment, a conclusion strengthened by Sumner Welles's role as president-maker in the tumultuous summer of 1933. That able diplomat returned to Washington, where he was instrumental in the abrogation of the Platt Amendment in 1934.

Fulgencio Batista, 1934-59

By 1934 Cuba had passed from the era of the Platt Amendment to the era of Batista. The onetime sergeant, after his decisive part in the martial events of 1933, gradually emerged as the arbiter of the island's destiny, in a dictatorship "mild, suave, and sweet," as he later described his rule. Until 1940 he ruled through puppets, seven of them in seven years, with Carlos Mendieta, Miguel Mariano Gómez, and Federico Laredo Brú the principal incumbents. In 1940 he assumed the presidency in his own name. In 1944, with commendable regard for legality—and, according to rumor, in deference to a personal request from Franklin D. Roosevelt—he permitted the election of his old ally, now a rival, Dr. Ramón Grau San Martín. In 1948 he withheld his hand as Carlos Prío Socarrás was chosen. In 1952, by a plot of his contriving, Batista again seized the presidency and sent Prío into exile. He was not ousted until New Year's Day, 1959.

Fulgencio Batista was only thirty-two when he led the coup of September, 1933, by which he flouted the seasoned politicians of the island, the entire corps of commissioned officers, and the prestige of the United States as represented by Ambassador Sumner Welles. The story of Batista's rise from poverty to riches furnishes inspiration of a sort to small boys in Cuban streets. Born on a farm in eastern Cuba in 1901, he had started out as a cane cutter, banana picker, bartender, and barber; at twenty, he joined

the army, studied shorthand, and acted as stenographer to officers. By 1933 he had attracted a considerable following among noncommissioned officers and enlisted men, and with their help he carried through the overturn of 1933.

He ruled as dictators have always ruled in Latin America, by grace of the army. By 1934 almost all the principal officers owed their commissions to him and were not allowed to forget it. He did not neglect the enlisted men: he raised their pay, built fine barracks, furnished good uniforms and excellent food, provided recreation fields, and established pension funds; the thirty thousand men in the army, navy, air force, and police became and continued to be his first reliance. Colonel Batista did not neglect other sectors. He knew full well the appetite of middle-class Cubans for public office, and he used his patronage to full effect, granting and withholding appointments in a fashion to strengthen his grip upon the island. Organized labor was cultivated with skill, and thousands of workers profited from the dictator's improvements in wages and working conditions. With the backing of the military forces, the civil servants of the republic, and the organized workers, Batista could face the grumblings of the intellectuals with a smile.

Up to 1944, Batista gave Cuba better government than it had ever had. Country roads and city streets were safer. Public business was conducted more expeditiously. Civil servants worked harder and engaged in less minor pilfering. The school system was enlarged, and entrusted to the direction of army officers. Public works—roads, bridges, harbor installations, and power plants—increased amazingly. With steady sugar prices, the national treasury was filled. The nagging ills of the Machado dictatorship scarcely appeared. The press enjoyed a considerable freedom much of the time. Political murders were infrequent. Critics of the government were not hustled off to jail—not so many, at least. Graft was reduced, or at least regularized. Batista himself grew rich from commissions on contracts, kickbacks on customs, and percentages on the National Lottery. When he retired in favor of Grau in 1944 and went to live in Florida, he was able to settle a fortune upon his divorced wife. Cautious observers said that he had other millions invested in Florida apartment houses and like ventures.

Cuba's experiences with Grau San Martín (1944-48) and Prío Socarrás (1948-52) persuaded many worthy citizens that Batista was indispensable. Grau came to the presidency with the prestige of a distinguished physician and an effective fighter against Machado, holding the affection of several generations of university students. As president, he disappointed the hopes of his admirers. He could not control the grafters who surrounded him, nor could he persuade his congress to adopt his reforms. There was steady deterioration in public services and increased corruption in high places and in low. The record of Prío Socarrás was even worse. Thievery reached new heights, and the president himself was able to build

a remarkable house in nearby La Chata at a cost of some two or three million dollars—on his salary of \$25,000. The breakdown of police forces, courts, and public administration was so complete as to threaten profitable business and scare off foreign investors.

There was, therefore, general relief when Batista made his spectacular and illegal return to power in March, 1952. It was done in the best *cuartelazo* (barracks-revolt) tradition: the careful planning of twenty-seven conspirators, the signal at 2:43 in the morning, the seizure of the army barracks at Camp Columbia, the exile of President Prío, the complete triumph of Batista. The dictatorship he imposed was thorough. The press was muzzled, the University closed; some critics escaped into exile and others were jailed. Within a few months an armed rebellion was put down swiftly, congress was indefinitely dissolved (but its members kept on the payroll), and military law was declared.

Unfortunately, Batista's last seven years in the presidency (1952-59) were marked by growing repression, terrorism by the police, and violent reprisals from angry citizens. Meanwhile, the island's economy boomed, sugar averaging more than 80 per cent of export revenues, with scattered profits from tobacco and mineral products. The Havana skyline was proud with fine new hotels and public buildings. A tunnel was bored under Havana harbor to a new subdivision promoted by cronies of the dictator. Never were the Cubans richer—at least, those Cubans who held office, who were granted concessions, who owned land and fine businesses—and the richest of them all was ex-sergeant Fulgencio Batista. In fact, under Batista Cuba had everything—except liberty.

Revolution

The concerted attack upon the Batista dictatorship began among university students. On July 26, 1953—little more than a year after Batista had seized office—some 165 youths stormed the *Moncada Army Barracks* in Santiago: more than half of them fell before machine-gun fire, while the survivors fled. Their leader was twenty-six-year-old Fidel Castro, a law student and the son of a wealthy sugar planter; he and his brother Raúl had been plotting for many months. Fidel Castro and other survivors of the Barracks incident managed to escape from Batista's police, while other gunmen wreaked vengeance upon citizens of doubtful loyalty. Castro then decided to surrender in order to put an end to the ruthless slaughter. On August 1, Fidel and Raúl gave themselves up and were sentenced to fifteen-year prison terms. Eleven months later, under pressure of public opinion, Batista extended amnesty to the Castro brothers and others. Fidel Castro fled to Mexico, where he gathered new and old allies around him.

planned his next attack upon Batista. On December 2, 1956, he landed with eighty-two men on the southeastern coast. Though most of them were shot by a detachment of Batista's army, a bare dozen, including Fidel and Raúl, found safety in the rugged jungles of the Sierra Maestra, west of the city of Santiago.

There followed a two-year siege of Fidel Castro's Sierra Maestra jungle hideout, which he managed to hold against all the weight of Fulgencio Batista's army, navy, and air force (and, shall we add, against the planes, tanks, and assorted oddments contributed by the United States of America to the cause of "hemispheric defense"). For sheer audacity, the saga of those young men deserves a place with Cortés's conquest of Tenochtitlán and Pizarro's march on Cajamarca. That little band of bearded youths, daily augmented by volunteers who pushed through the armed lines, got food, clothing, and arms from friends all over the island, and from sympathizers in Mexico, the United States, and elsewhere. They also sent out raiding parties to collect supplies from nearby plantations. When Batista's army and air force seemed about to wipe them out, Castro's men began to burn sugar fields. The movement spread underground until there were rebel units throughout the island. In March, 1957, twenty-one young men forced their way into the presidential palace and almost succeeded in killing the dictator.

At each step in this drama the Batista government declared that Castro was dead, and the rebellion ended. In February, 1957, Herbert L. Matthews of *The New York Times* scored a journalistic triumph by making his way through the army lines to Castro's jungle hideout and bringing back word to the world that the young man was alive and fighting.

In November, 1957, a meeting was held in Miami at which the followers of ex-Presidents Grau San Martín and Prío Socarrás pledged to make common cause with Fidel Castro—a move promptly repudiated by Castro, who proposed to have no traffic with those discredited leaders.

The year 1958 was marked by a running fight between the rebels and the government. Castro and his men continued to burn, pillage, rob, and terrorize. Batista retaliated with wholesale torture and murder of suspected rebel sympathizers. In February unexpected encouragement came to the rebels from the Roman Catholic Church: a pastoral letter from the bishops called for "a government of national unity which can restore our country to normal and peaceful political life." In that same month, the news of the overthrow of Venezuela's Pérez Jiménez brought cheer to the fighters in the Sierra Maestra. By plane and by ship, fresh recruits and new supplies of arms reached Castro's camp. But in March the United States placed an embargo on shipment of arms to both the government of Batista and the rebels.

In April Fidel Castro called for a general strike against Batista; when it failed to materialize, Batista again announced that Fidel was dead and

that the battle was over. Meanwhile, Raúl Castro had established another rebel stronghold in the Sierra del Cristal in the northeastern province of Oriente. As the result of this running battle between Castro's forces and Batista's, there was anarchy in the eastern end of the island, with practically all communications paralyzed. Castro's tactics included kidnapping of American employees of sugar plantations and of mines; these measures brought sharp words from Washington. Castro also took reprisals against British-owned enterprises in the area, when England continued to sell planes and arms to the Batista government. Meanwhile, Batista, despite the defeats which he was suffering from Castro's guerrillas, went ahead with the presidential election of November, 1958, and his candidate was handsomely elected—although most of the voters refused to vote. By December it was clear that Batista's time was up.

New Year's Day, 1959, marked the end of the long era of Batista. Word spread that morning that the dictator, his family, and scores of his aides had fled by plane and ship—Batista had joined the growing colony of unseated tyrants in Santo Domingo. The news furnished the signal for the mobs to do their work: all day they ranged through the streets of Havana, smashing windows, looting shops and houses, lighting bonfires of furniture, clothing, and books in the streets—repeating line for line what other mobs had done on August 12, 1933, when Machado had fled the city. The rejoicing was not confined to the ragged mobs: sober citizens generally applauded the end of Batista. The red-and-black flags of the "26 of July" movement appeared on buildings, automobiles, trucks; portraits of the bearded Fidel Castro were placarded on walls everywhere. The young rebel was Cuba's messiah.

Fidel Castro, 1959—

As the ragged and gaunt young men of Fidel Castro's victorious army marched through the streets of Havana on New Year's Day in 1959, some bystanders may have recalled a remark made by Batista nine years before: "This island would be a paradise if it were properly governed." At this writing (November, 1960), we ask how properly the island has been governed by Fidel Castro. Certainly it has been a one-man rule: one of Castro's first acts was to evict his hand-picked president, the incorruptible Manual Urrutia Lleo, because he mildly criticized Fidel's measures. He replaced Urrutia by a nonentity, Oswaldo Dorticos Torrado, who proceeded to act as a cheer leader for Castro. One by one, many who had stood by Castro during the years in the Sierra Maestra were eliminated when they dared to argue with Premier Fidel. As a basis for judging Fidel Castro, after his first twenty-two months in office, we have both his words and his acts.

Castro has proved the most talkative of messiahs: during many hours on television, he has delivered himself of millions of words for the consumption of his followers, and for the confounding of his enemies. And there has also been plenty of action.

Fidel Castro set a record for vindictiveness against the "criminals" of Batista's regime (and, let it be freely admitted, many of them were criminals): some 700 faced firing squads after trials notable for their brevity and levity. Thousands of Batista's aides were jailed. And the roll of those executed and jailed was steadily augmented by followers of Castro who were guilty of disagreeing with him.

Castro made a clean sweep of government departments, placing his faithful servants in all key positions. Announcing that Batista had plundered to the tune of \$200,000,000 (which may be true), he has demanded scrupulous honesty from all public servants—with substantial success.

Land reform has been the spearhead of Castro's program. The enactment of a land reform bill in the spring of 1959 was hailed as the Magna Charta of the revolution. The great estates—Cuban, Spanish, American—were to be sliced up; the owners were to be permitted to retain certain minimum properties, and were to be compensated with 4¼ per cent national bonds; each peasant family was to receive 66.6 acres. The handling of this land reform was entrusted to the National Institute of Agrarian Reform, to which Fidel Castro dedicated much of his attention. During the years 1959 and 1960, there was wholesale expropriation of sugar, tobacco, and cattle lands. Machinery, cattle, and agricultural equipment were taken over without compensation. Many large holdings—Cuban and foreign—were seized from families which had worked them for two or three generations. The United Fruit Company, whose holdings of some 270,000 acres were scientifically developed for sugar cane and cattle raising, and which had combined effective management with generous social services, was being stripped of its properties in 1960. Meanwhile, the promises of the land reform bill had not been fulfilled. The owners of land had received no bonds, nor had the bonds been printed. And the landless peasants, instead of receiving those 66.6-acre plots, found themselves drafted to work on great co-operative farms managed by the Institute.

Alongside this expropriation of land came steady pressure against other foreign investors. Some hotel and country club properties were taken over. American mining operators with concessions to dig iron ore, sulphur, nickel, cobalt, and other minerals were finding their operations hampered, and their plants seized. "Our hardest fight," announced President Ernesto Guevara of the Banco Nacional de Cuba in March, 1960, "is against the North American monopolies."

The United States early became the chief target of Castro's invective. The American press, generally critical of his moves, was often accused of being subsidized by pro-Batista elements. The American State Depart-

ment, scrupulously adhering to a policy of moderation, was subject to fervid abuse. When Castro came to power in January, 1959, Washington picked Philip W. Bonsal as Ambassador to Cuba. Bonsal had won laurels as a foe of dictators when he dared criticize Rojas Pinilla in Colombia, and had been recalled at the suggestion of that tyrant. Although Bonsal, both in public and private, made clear the friendly and sympathetic attitude of his government toward the Castro regime, he was subjected to repeated slights and insults from Castro and his aides. Meanwhile, in interminable harangues on television, Castro accused the United States of aggression and hostile plotting. When small planes, flying from private fields in Florida, made trips over Cuban territory, Castro charged that these trips constituted invasion of Cuban sovereignty. When Washington ordered strict control of such flights—very difficult to achieve, since there are over 200 private airfields in Florida—Castro was still not satisfied and continued to accuse the American government of bad faith. When Washington refused arms and planes to the Castro government, and sought to persuade its European allies to adopt the same policy, there was fresh outburst of anger. In March, 1960, a French ship carrying munitions from Belgium blew up in Havana's harbor, killing some seventy men: Castro immediately went on the air to denounce this outrage as still another instance of American "sabotage," and the State Department's protest was denounced by Castro as "insulting." Further patient notes from Washington were met with further outcries of vituperation.

Fidel Castro's cold war on Washington, waged throughout 1960, was marked by his courting of the Communist powers and by his efforts to stir up all Latin Americans against the "imperialistic" United States. After a visit by Russia's Mikoyan, the USSR granted the Castro government a credit of \$100 million, also agreeing to buy 5 million tons of Cuban sugar over a five-year period—at the world price (about 2 cents a pound below the price paid by the Americans). Then came a trade pact with Poland, under which Warsaw promised Cuba sundry industrial goods, including helicopters—those last seemingly designed for attacks upon Castro's enemies in the Caribbean area, including the Trujillo government in the Dominican Republic. There followed a trade agreement with Communist China. Then Castro announced formal recognition of both the USSR and the People's Republic of China, and the embassies of those two powers were opened with much fanfare. The ebullient Khrushchev supported Fidel Castro's denunciations of the United States by promising that "rockets would fly" to protect the sovereignty of Cuba.

Meanwhile, Fidel Castro's agents in all the Latin American capitals busily provoked outcry against the United States. In Panama Cuba's diplomats joined hands with those of the United Arab Republic in exciting demands for the seizure of the Panama Canal. In Guatemala, Honduras, and Costa Rica they stirred up local attacks upon the United Fruit Company.

In Venezuela the *fidelistas*—including many university students—conspired with the Communists to embarrass the constructive regime of Rómulo Betancourt. Castro's admirers in Mexico joined hands with the Communists in organizing demonstrations against Washington. In Bolivia the *fidelistas* yoked their efforts with those of Juan Lechín and his perpetually angry tin miners to harass President Paz Estenssoro. In all the other republics *fidelistista* sentiment was strident among university students, and even sober and reasonable citizens were inclined to regard Fidel as the instrument for releasing Latin America from "the tyranny of American imperialism." The force of this appeal became clear at the meeting of the Organization of American States in San José, Costa Rica, in August, 1960: in the resolution deploring Communist inroads in the Western Hemisphere the Latin American states refused to name Cuba.

Cuba, the United States, and Sugar

The steady worsening of relations between the United States and Cuba during 1959 and 1960 was an ominous reminder that the two fundamental weaknesses of Cuba's position remained what they were twenty, forty, and fifty years ago: the tyranny of sugar over the island's economy, and the smothering nearness of the United States. In 1960, as in all the years since Cuba was set free, it must have been clear to Fidel Castro that Cuba must master its sugar problem, and that, finally, Cuba must find some way to live at peace with the United States.

Cuba's indictment of the United States should be met with candor. Much can be said for Washington's fair treatment of Cuba: we did set Cuba free in 1898; we withdrew in 1902, and made the withdrawal unequivocal by the abrogation of the Platt Amendment in 1934; since 1934, we have sedulously refrained from interfering in the island's affairs: despite the provocations by Fidel Castro, punitive measures were not taken against the Havana government until 1960. The charge of imperialism against the United States is specious. But it should be freely conceded that Cuba's close ties with the United States are responsible for some of the island's ills, and, specifically, for the concentration of land in a few hands. Under the generous trade relations established after Cuba became independent, there was an inevitable flood of American capital into the sugar business of the island, and this caused mischief. "It is a striking paradox," wrote the authors of The Foreign Policy Association's report (1935) on the island's economy, "that, as a consequence of its struggle for political independence, Cuba lost control over its economic resources." The little farmer was the principal casualty. The most serious blows to the Cuban farmer came during the post-World War I crisis of 1920, when sugar prices broke within six

months from the all-time high of 22.5 cents a pound to 3.75 cents and, as a result, thousands of farmers lost their lands. The banks which held their mortgages then sold them to the great sugar corporations.

Sugar was thus responsible for fixing the latifundia system upon the island. The 1946 agricultural census revealed that of the island's 28 million acres, 22.5 million acres were held in 159,958 farms, but that about three-quarters of that farm acreage was concentrated in 8 per cent of the holdings. And, even more significant, a mere one-half of one per cent of the farms included more than one-third of all farm land. A further weakness in the land pattern was the immense, but unreckoned, amount of good soil withheld from cultivation, maintained as a reserve for future sugar cultivation.

This was the pattern of land tenure which confronted the new and untested leaders of the island in 1959. Fidel Castro was right in demanding a more equitable division of the soil, but his land reform bill was a carelessly drafted and unrealistic document—and a document whose terms were ignored throughout 1959 and 1960. In embarking upon his reforms in early 1959, Castro angrily repulsed all overtures from the American government for co-operation, and even refused to meet the American Ambassador. Despite Castro's brusque treatment, the Eisenhower administration assured Cuba of "its interest in, and sympathy for, agrarian reform," affirming "its full support of soundly conceived programs for rural betterment, including land reform." In tough realism, it is easy to understand Fidel Castro's contemptuous dismissal of all such overtures. He did not understand that the American government in 1960 was quite different in temper from that of Philander C. Knox in the days of "dollar diplomacy." Castro continued to treat the American Ambassador as the agent of an aggressive power which could not be trusted.

Cuba's economic fate is linked with sugar. As a producer of sugar for export, Cuba stands first among all the nations. During the years 1951-55 her fields yielded an average of 6,078,000 short tons annually—13.6 per cent of the sugar produced in the world, and 20.4 per cent of all the cane sugar. Although much of this sugar was controlled by foreign interests, the Cuban-owned share had risen from 22.4 per cent of the total in 1939 to 60.2 per cent in 1950, a ratio that was steadily increasing. The colonial status of the Cuban economy was gradually lessening before Fidel Castro made his spectacular moves.

But reliance upon sugar is also the Achilles' heel of the Cuban economy. In almost all nations there has been progress towards national self-sufficiency in sugar, even though, as in the United States, domestic production is costly and can only survive behind tariff barriers. As a result of this world situation, Cuba has never been able to sell as much sugar as she could produce; an indication of her capacity was the experience of 1952 when Cu-

ban production reached about 8 million short tons—more than the world could buy.

Ever since Cuba emerged as an independent nation, the United States has sought to encourage Cuban economic health (and also to tie the Cuban market to that of the United States). By the Commercial Convention of 1903, Washington gave Cuba a 20 per cent tariff advantage on sales of her products in the American market, and Cuba reciprocated by giving equal preference to American goods. This arrangement gave great advantages to both parties: during the 1920's Cuba furnished about 50 per cent of all the sugar consumed in the United States, and the United States furnished about 75 per cent of all Cuba's imports. A major blow to this mutually profitable trade pattern was the Smoot-Hawley tariff bill of 1930 with its increased duty on sugar: this was instrumental in cutting down Cuba's sales of sugar to the United States from the previous rate of about 50 per cent of American consumption to about 30 per cent. However, by the Jones-Costigan Act of 1934, we adopted the quota system under which the American Secretary of Agriculture each year sets the percentage of our sugar which will be bought from various countries; since then about one-third has come from Cuba. But our favored treatment of Cuban sugar went further. We have artificially maintained the domestic price of sugar in the United States at about 6 cents per pound, as compared with a world price of about 3 cents. After reckoning the cost of delivery in American ports, this means that we have paid a premium of about 2 cents per pound for Cuban sugar—in 1958 this bonus payment for Cuban sugar totaled about \$150 million.

Castigated almost daily by the Cuban Premier during 1959 and 1960, Washington maintained an admirable restraint; the notes dispatched to Cuba were patient. By early 1960 there were demands from many congressmen for punitive measures against the Castro government. In June Washington finally struck back. Empowered by Congress, President Eisenhower decreed an end to all purchases of sugar for the balance of 1960. The Department of State warned tourists against visiting Cuba. And then came the embargo upon all imports to Cuba, aside from food and medicine.

Critics of the Eisenhower policy, both in and out of the United States, denounced the measures as calculated to throw Cuba more decisively into the Communist orbit, arguing that the United States would have been wiser to invite multilateral action by the OAS.

Fidel Castro's reply to Washington was a fresh torrent of abuse. His program of expropriation (or more properly, perhaps, of confiscation) of American properties was speeded up. By November, 1960, almost all American-owned lands had been seized, together with mining companies, oil refineries, branches of American banks, mercantile enterprises, hotels, industrial plants, and utility concerns—with assets valued at more than a billion

dollars. And sundry American citizens in Cuba, some connected with the Embassy, were subjected to insults, and in some cases even to police violence. Three young men, all American citizens, were involved in an abortive plot against Castro; and, after a brief trial in which their rights of defense (by American standards) were brusquely denied, they were summarily executed. Washington's protests were dismissed as "insulting."

In September, 1960, Fidel Castro personally carried his indictment of the United States to the United Nations. His stormy days in New York were climaxed by his four-hour speech at the UN. His fiery denunciation of the United States, as well as his attacks on colonialism, won considerable support from new Asian and African states. Then, in November 1960, sporadic outbreaks in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Guatemala were charged against Cuba's agents. At the request of the governments of Guatemala and Nicaragua, the United States despatched naval forces to patrol their Caribbean coasts. Meanwhile, Fidel Castro and his cohorts were making noisy threats against the American naval base of Guatánamo. The last weeks of 1960 saw American-Cuban relations at a dangerous all-time low.

As for Cuba in late 1960, the island's future was clouded. There was evidence of widespread unrest and plottings to unseat the Castro regime. The contrivers of the opposition to Castro were the agents of such discredited leaders as Batista, Grau San Martín, Prío Socorrás. But Castro still seemed to hold the loyalty of the masses. The great question mark was sugar, long the supplier of more than 80 per cent of export revenue. It was not clear in late 1960 where Cuba would be able to sell the six to eight million tons which she can produce each year. Meanwhile the island's economy seemed to be in the doldrums—although few firm facts were available. The Cuban peso, long standing at par with the dollar, was selling in the black market at discounts ranging from 50 to 75 per cent. Nor was it clear how well the agricultural and industrial workers were faring. They had starved under Batista, and it remained to be seen whether they were doing better under Castro. Cuba could still be described with the generalization "rich land, poor people." Friends of Cuba, no matter how deeply they deplored the excesses of Fidel Castro, could only hope that the islanders would find security and peace.

Reflecting upon the sorry state of Cuba in 1960, the onlooker could say that two things are reasonably clear: Cuba was indeed overdue for a revolution, and revolutions are never mild and gentlemanly.