

American Universities Field Staff



REPORTS
SERVICE

BY VOICE AND VIOLENCE

Part I: Observations on Cuban Reaction
to Revolutionary Word and Deed

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AUFS associates have been chosen for their skill in collecting, reporting, and evaluating data. Each has combined long personal observation and experience in his foreign area with advanced studies relating to it.

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"Another year and there will be only four kinds of people in Cuba." The rancher smiled as he repeated the witticism he had heard in Havana.

"O.K.," I said, "who will they be?"

"Our rulers, their slaves, dead Cubans, and exiled Cubans," he replied.

"And you, Don José?"

"Not dead. And not a slave either." He had stopped smiling. "I'm going North¹ or else I'll join the Fidelistas. All the preparations have been made."

We were alone in his ranch house in the valley where he had made a fortune and lost it--to the agrarian reformers who had taken his land (all but a thousand acres) and his cattle (all but a prize bull and the cows that could live on the pasture he still had).

"They've been nice to me. They remember how I helped them when Batista was in Cuba.

¹ "going North"--escaping to the United States.

They let me pick the land I could keep and the bull and the cows."

He pointed to the animals as we drove to the sugar refinery he managed. "These are mine," he said. The cattle looked well fed. The grass where they stood was green. There were salt licks and a shaded water hole.

We drove on. "I could join the Revolution," the rancher said. "My father was a poor man . . . worked in the cane fields when he came from Spain. I worked for every cent I had." We came to another field, fenced in and with its own small frame house before which several men sat. The rancher waved but the men seemed not to see us. He pointed then to some cattle. "Those belong to them," he said. "See the brand? "

The rancher stopped his car and I saw the letters of INRA (the National Institute for Agrarian Reform) burnt over the brand of the rancher. The cattle looked ill or hungry. Their bones stood out and they rolled their eyes at us. The land was parched with the grass completely gone in several places.

"They'll be taking the rest of the land soon," he observed. "They'll take all the ranch land everywhere in Cuba because they'll have to; they're wasting what they have now. A crime. Those poor beasts starving, thirsty, dying on their feet. Not even worth slaughtering. A tragedy, I tell you; a tragedy for Cuba."

And we rode on to the sugar mill. The rancher had an appointment with the INRA zone chief about cane land to be expropriated. "This revolution!" he said as we pulled up before an old rambling house. "All it does is take, take, take. And spend, spend, spend--other people's money." We went into the house and had coffee while waiting for the INRA delegate.

The Cuban rancher was a self-made millionaire, a debonair little man of fifty-three who retained three fine automobiles, a family home in Havana and, he boasted, two mistresses. For the rancher, who actually had helped the revolutionaries overthrow the regime of Fulgencio Batista (he purchased and hid guns for the rebels), the Cuban Revolution had degenerated into gigantic larceny: it forcibly took wealth from some people, assertedly to spend it for others, wasting huge amounts in the process.

This is a view of the Cuban Revolution which can be heard--you can't avoid hearing it--in all the six provinces of the island. It is expressed not only by Cubans who have lost property or who have property they fear might be lost, but by Cubans without property. The Revolution, they tell you, is much more destructive than constructive. It is destroying private properties deliberately and not only through neglect and ignorance. For the masterminds of the Cuban Revolution, you are told, wish to form a "classless" society where, as the rancher said, the revolutionaries will rule: everyone else will toil and those who object will die or be exiled.

But the indictment you hear of the Revolution does not end with--it may not even include--the "class warfare" waged through agrarian reform. Some Cubans charge the revolutionaries with throttling them into silence and submission while indoctrinating their children² and the illiterate peasantry with hatred for America and all kinds of insidious notions. They further charge that the revolutionaries are coercing labor, ruining trade, tourism, and business, and cheating the landless.

If there is any softening of these accusations it usually comes with the admission that "for the first time in 400 years Cuba has an honest government" and that "there are more schools and better teaching" and that "the poor may be getting better housing, medical attention, and recreational facilities."

The same Cubans who indict the Revolution seem pleased when a visitor talks of the Revolution's "better side." They seem reluctant to describe the deeds done in the name of the Revolution and not only out of fear of reprisals. For nearly all the people have been disillusioned. They had high hopes, they tell you, for a "decent New Deal" when the revolutionaries took over on January 1, 1959. "And see what we got!" one Cuban then might say. Or, "I just don't understand what has happened. I don't understand it at all." Sometimes the Cuban's perplexity is feigned. If you gain his confidence he will come forth with an explanation of what he thinks has happened to the Revolution he once believed in.

The observer in Castro's Cuba encounters a surfeit of appraisals by the Cuban people. To every posture, move, and policy of the Revolution he studies he finds attached at least two and probably more Cuban explanations. This shattering ambiguity must be blamed on Dr. Fidel Castro. For he is the Creator and Maximum Leader of the Revolution, an insular euphemism for its Strongman, its Generalissimo, the Boss.

Fidel makes and unmakes presidents, ministers, and the law. He has taken the title of Prime Minister; he has won the Hemingway trophy for deep sea fishing; he is easily the world champion endurance orator; and yet his philosophical, political moorings, his ultimate ambitions and deeper motives are as debatable in Cuba as is his Revolution.

² The "Juvenile Patrols" under the supervision of the National Revolutionary Police number some 70,000 boys of between six and fourteen years of age. The Association of Rebel Youths, controlled by the Rebel Army (Raul Castro), enrolls boys and girls of around fifteen and sixteen years. The Juvenile Brigades of Revolutionary Labor (a kind of WPA), for youths between fourteen and eighteen, under police and armed forces supervision, work on various projects. University Militia Brigades of the Federation of University Students enlist both men and women. The Communist Party's "Socialist Youth" organization is active. [The Roman Catholic Church has its "Catholic Working Youth" organizations on the Rightist side.]

A lengthy cross-examination of Fidel with a psychiatrist in attendance and a lie detector at hand might resolve the major difficulty in Cuba for the political observer, who then could obtain something approximating an enlightened view of the man by cross-checking with his biographers, relatives, comrades-in-revolt, and critics.

But Fidel isn't keen on Yankees or psychiatrists and Fidel's Cuban biographer is in political exile; most of his relations aren't at home to callers; his closest comrades of the anti-Batista struggle are dead or in jail and his critics, if at liberty, aren't talking much. Raul, his little brother, is Armed Forces Minister and Fidel's proclaimed No. 1 choice as successor.³ But Raul is more enigmatic than Fidel, and so uncommunicative that strangers won't believe he is a Cuban.

Denied these sources, the political observer in Cuba cannot scientifically dissect the Maximum Leader; he can only try to observe the Leader's Revolution. What is it doing and why? Where is it going? The result: appraisals and reappraisals. For Fidel's Revolution is in rapid motion. It has devoured friends and enemies even before they could apologize for their mistakes in timing.

A Cuban, in the midst of predicting that Captain X is in trouble and that certain newspapers are about to be silenced may find that Captain X has landed in prison and the newspapers have been seized. This accelerated cannibalism deprived me of access to a helpful military aide of the Prime Minister between dawn and dusk. A government official that I visited in the provinces was found on my next trip to be a refugee in an embassy in Havana.

In deeper waters the Revolution also moves fast enough to confound statesmen. When the former President of Costa Rica, Pepe Figüeras, came to Cuba, the Cubans considered him a loyal ally. When Pepe returned to his country, he was a chagrined and insulted man, having been told a thing or two publicly by Fidel. The Cubans were told that Pepe had become a counter-revolutionary.⁴

In the springtime of his triumph, Fidel visited Venezuela receiving and giving ardent sentiments of friendship. Now that country, too, has been moved to the enemy side of Fidel's ledger. A conspiracy is being hatched in Caracas, a center of "counterrevolutionary propaganda," the Fidelistas say.

³ No. 2 choice is President Osvaldo Dorticós.

⁴ The Costa Rican was told bluntly to mind his own business when he tried to advise Fidel not to exaggerate in attacking the United States. Governor Muñoz Marín of Puerto Rico, liberal elder statesman of the Caribbean, got similar treatment from Fidel. And Muñoz had urged the State Department to be patient with Fidel.

In like manner Fidel has disposed of journalists who once praised him, calling them "lackeys of the monopolies" as he also has called Venezuela's Social Democrats, Guatemala's President Ydigoras, Puerto Rico's Social Planners, and the Panamanian politicians who act as if honest elections could be held under the very guns of the "Yankee imperialists."

A government-controlled Cuban radio station has labeled President Alberto Lleras Camargo of Colombia "a lackey" of the United States. Then Radio Mambí added: "The whole world knows that Alessandri [President of Chile] and Frondizi [President of Argentina] and Lleras himself are the servile satellites of the United States." From the Caudillo of a Latin American country as small and insignificant as the Caribbean island of Cuba (when compared to a continental power like Argentina or an oil-rich land like Venezuela) these attacks seem inexplicable to many.

An interesting political controversy was started in Brazil when a Presidential candidate was given the treatment royal by Fidel in Cuba in a successful effort to commit the candidate to Fidel and to make Brazil's attitude toward the Cuban Revolution an election issue. All of Fidel's intrusions into Latin American politics seem to be directed at making his Revolution a political issue within the nations of this hemisphere. Thus, he hopes to bring into power through votes and mass pressures in each country, a government which will side with him against the United States--not with the United States against him, as seems to be the policy of the governments whose leaders he attacks. Actions by Fidel to achieve these ends appears to be the reason why the current Government of Guatemala denounced Fidel for "interference" and broke off diplomatic relations with Cuba.⁵ Fidel apparently doesn't hesitate to seek votes for his Revolution in other countries though he flatly denies the Cubans the franchise.

There was a time when Fidel swore fealty to the democratic process in Cuba and sought modestly to step aside so the politicians could renew it there.⁶ Now Fidel publicly sneers at even the thought of Cuban elections. His coterie shouts approval of the Cubans' inability to change leadership peacefully. "Elecciones--para que?" ("Elections--what for?") they cry as they mock bourgeois party governments everywhere.

⁵ The President of Guatemala acting with considerable internal support--as indicated by the press there--broke off relations with Fidel and charged him with interfering in Guatemalan affairs. President Ramón Villeda Morales, shortly before visiting the United States in June, quietly informed Fidel he would have to cease interfering in Honduran affairs. The Cuban Ambassador, Silvano Sorhegui, was recalled to Havana. Earlier the editor of a Honduran newspaper, Ventura Ramos of El Cronista, spoke on the radio of a coming revolution in Honduras which he hinted would be sparked by the Cuban revolutionaries whom he said he greatly admired.

⁶ The first revolutionary government was formed without its Maximum Leader. It lasted a few weeks.

In a speech he has repeated many times, Fidel praises Cuba's workers, farmers, students, and intellectuals, "who," he cries, "unanimously support me." With "their consent" he rules, and this he calls "a people's democracy." Fidel seems unconcerned by his membership in a chorus that includes puppets in Eastern Europe and tyrants in many places.

How Cubans and others explain Fidel's conduct when they do explain it, will be discussed in more detail in later reports. Their views can be summarized by saying that Fidel is described as:

1) A nationalist revolutionary of the Left (like Gamal Abdel Nasser⁷ of the United Arab Republic whose friendship has been sought by Fidel) who acts (a) in response to a thought-out plan, or (b) without a plan, and in response to revolutionary dynamics and outside forces as they are brought to bear on Cuba, including Great Power relations and his ability to exploit them to benefit the Revolution.

2) An immature (possibly mentally unstable) idealist who has found responsibility too much for him but whose intentions are noble, if his judgment is weak.⁸ A leader who is unable to cope with his cynical, dishonorable self-seeking associates who mislead him from time to time. But Fidel, when all is said and done, will lead his people to the promised land.

3) An honorable and inspired National Hero who knows exactly what he is doing and where he is going and who is misled by no one but uses everyone for the National Good. He speaks only the Truth and acts only for Cuba; if he has changed it is because others shifted their position in relation to Cuba. He is neither of the Left nor Right, the advocate of no ideology, the imitator of no one. He is unique and he will go down in history as a Liberator-Reformer more profound than Bolívar or Martí. [Simón Bolívar, Leader of Latin Americans in their revolution against Spain; José Martí, Cuba's George Washington and Patriot-Saint.]

⁷ Among Americans, the newspaper columnist Joseph Alsop makes "the guess that the right way to understand Castro and company is not to search for Soviet agents but to remember Gamal Abdel Nasser and his junta of young Egyptian officers Castro, like Nasser is doing business with the Soviets . . . is using the local Communists for his own purposes . . . has been greatly influenced by Marxist ideas; and it seems quite possible that among Castro's inner circle [Ernesto] Guevara, at least, was once a member of the Communist party"

⁸ One of the early and most consistent defenders of Fidel and the Revolutionary Government is Herbert L. Matthews, editorial board member of The New York Times. He has called the Revolution one of "youth, idealism, utopia, and of neophytes." (In a speech at Stanford University on October 9, 1959.)

4) A diabolically clever egocentric youth who simulated a love for humanist, democratic reforms and attracted the support of well-meaning liberals and moderates, in and out of Cuba. He gained victory with their essential support and ruthlessly discarded them when they objected to his plans for a collectivist Cuba under a small clique headed by Fidel. Fidel and this clique strongly resemble the Communists of other lands, and employ amoral, opportunistic, ruthless means. But not all the Fidelistas are oriented to the Moscow pattern. There are Fidelistas who look to Tito in Yugoslavia or to Mao in China for guidance. They are agreed, however, upon the need to undermine the position of the United States in Cuba and the Western Hemisphere and the corresponding need to cultivate the East. They conceive of themselves as an advance party in the New World of a Wave of the Future, fashioned in Havana.⁹

5) A Communist-in-disguise seeking to "convert Cuba into a Soviet satellite" and/or to provoke the United States into an act of aggression which would make of Cuba another Hungary and undermine American leadership everywhere.

It is only possible, as I have pointed out previously, to identify Fidel politically by studying his Revolution in action--there being no opportunity for an intimate study of the man who furnishes much new evidence, as he shifts postures and ruthlessly pushes ahead, of being an extraordinarily complex personality.

Some of the people whose duties as journalists or diplomats, require them to listen to Fidel's endless harangues on radio and television decided more than a year ago that Fidel was afflicted with a mental disease. My own impression of Fidel's long and numerous speeches is that only people who loved Fidel dearly could say they enjoyed them. A year or so ago most Cubans loved Fidel dearly and many Cubans enjoyed his orations of four, five, and even nine hours. By the summer of 1960 fewer were listening, but he still had a large audience. His listeners included educated and well-informed Cubans as well as the illiterate and ignorant.

An unemotional analysis of Fidel's oratory suggests he has a purpose for what some listeners call his inane if not insane and certainly boring repetition.¹⁰ Fidel has made the same speech a number of times, varying only his manner of presentation and the introductory and closing themes. He also has the habit during an oration of repeating in different verbal garb the same questions and assertions. This is a practice which disgusts many people but it may be effective in rural Cuba.

⁹ A view presented from time to time by people testifying before committees of the United States Senate.

¹⁰ The technique of constant repetition to establish a political thesis has long been in use. If Fidel is aiming his orations at illiterate Latin American audiences and speaking for propaganda organs at home and abroad, he is using a well-tried and effective method.

Among the themes he has repeated many times is the one which casts the United States as a villainous conspirator who plants time bombs on European freighters carrying munitions to Havana so that the explosives will be set off while being unloaded, thus claiming the maximum number of innocent victims. American villains, he repeats and repeats, sent a plane over Havana to bomb women and children, and a United States Navy plane over Oriente to drop its gas tank on peaceful farmers; other little planes were sent into Cuba to burn sugar cane fields and sugar refineries; American submarines and naval ships are sent into Cuban waters to molest the peaceful revolutionaries and for nefarious purposes connected with a prospective invasion of Cuba by its war criminals who are harbored in safety and luxury in the United States.

By retelling these stories after they had been denied and often after he presumably knows they are false, Fidel has laid himself open to charges of deliberate, repeated falsehood for the perverse purpose of teaching his people to hate and suspect their continental neighbor.¹¹ Interpretations of

¹¹ There is reason to believe that Fidelistas arranged for a flight of two American pilots into Cuba in order to capture them. American Navy planes flew over Oriente Province to search for a lost comrade after permission for their flights was obtained. But Fidelista organs and Fidel himself claimed the planes had deliberately violated Cuban airspace and dropped a gas tank for subversive purposes, a pure invention. Fidel charged that bombs had been dropped on Havana last autumn by a propaganda plane sent from Florida by his exiled enemies. Even the Havana police chief said there was no evidence of bombing. When a munitions ship exploded in Havana harbor, probably because of unbelievable carelessness, Fidel gave the impression he knew the United States had done it and he used a mass funeral to orate against Americans. A trap was set for an American pilot who had picked up fleeing Cubans near Havana, though it would have been easy to arrest those awaiting him before they signaled him to his death. There was a wide-spread hysterical press campaign charging the United States with planning imminent attack based only on a routine embassy leaflet intended to protect American homes during internal turmoil and used without criticisms after Batista fled. An American submarine was fired upon in waters the United States Navy had used many times before, allegedly well outside Cuban territory.

(The United States Department of State on November 9, 1959, issued a statement to the press replying to "inaccurate, malicious, and misleading reports" in Cuba on the Havana plane incident of the previous October. On October 27 Ambassador Philip W. Bonsal called on President Dorticós and in the presence of Cuba's Foreign Minister Raul Roa expressed Washington's "preoccupation over what seemed to be deliberate and concerted efforts in Cuba" to instill "distrust and hostility" toward Americans. Bonsal recalled the statement on October 21 of the National Police Chief of Cuba that the plane piloted by the former Chief of the Cuban Air Force, Pedro Diaz Lanz on that day "had dropped leaflets but had not dropped bombs." The United States Government viewed "with shock and amazement" efforts [in Cuba] to imply that it contended the "bombing of Havana" Bonsal declared.)

such conduct range from Walter Lippmann's¹² statement that attacks upon the United States "are popular and progressive" in Cuba and Latin America "and rally mass support" for Fidel to the view of many Americans, Cubans, and other Latin Americans: that they are straight out of a Communist handbook for would-be "proletarian dictatorships."

Fidel tells the Cubans he is creating "a free and independent" nation where there shall be no very rich and no very poor, no racial discrimination and enough schools, housing, medical care, and recreation for all, with no unemployment and no exploitation of man by man (the "imperialists, monopolists, Yankee interests, and the landowners"). To bring about this utopia, however, Fidel adds that the Cubans first must defeat "foreign aggressors" and their allies, "the counterrevolutionaries." The Cuban worker must "volunteer" a part (four per cent) of his wages for the purchase of arms; he must join a militia and drill, and he must be alert to the conspiracies¹³ against his country while prepared constantly to sacrifice his life for it. "Patria o muerte," shout the Fidelistas.

The Maximum Leader also tells the Cubans that all over the earth the disfranchised, landless, backward peoples are watching the Cubans and awaiting the outcome. If the Cubans make a success of their Revolution, he predicts, the underdeveloped countries of Latin America also will shake off their Yankee imperialists as will people elsewhere in the world. The Cubans, Fidel

¹² Walter Lippmann holds that Fidel's attack upon the United States "rallies mass support not only in Cuba but in many other countries in this hemisphere. . . . To be anti-Yankee is to be popular and progressive." He explains this by saying that "in our relations with Latin America, we have with notable exceptions, identified ourselves with the support of the past and as opponents of the future." Thus he finds that "the chickens are coming home to roost." Lippmann says that it looks at times as if Castro "is trying to provoke us into an intervention in order to rally his own people and to arouse mass support in the whole hemisphere." Thus in the Cuban crisis, he finds "there is at stake our ability to convince our American neighbors and the world outside that we are not the enemies but are indeed the friends of the liberating, democratic and progressive movements of our age."

¹³ At a trial of 145 persons in January 1960, the Revolutionary Government claimed that Generalissimo Rafael Trujillo sent arms worth \$500,000 from the Dominican Republic to Cuba to bring about a rebellion against the Castro regime. The plot was aborted and the defendants were given varying jail sentences for subversion. During the spring of 1960 an anti-Castro force reportedly engaged Rebel Army units in Oriente, in an uprising, led it was said by a former Rebel Army captain. And anti-Castro students were dispersed with gunfire during the visit to Havana of Soviet Deputy Prime Minister Mikoyan. Later several conspiracies were reported by the press, many involving former Fidelistas high in the Rebel Army. All were uncovered and the conspirators arrested.

tells them, are the glorious advance guard of a universal movement for liberation from "imperialism" by which he means American imperialism. The Cubans, he assures his people, have the active support of the colonial peoples who will rally around them if the "reactionaries" strike their island.

Meanwhile, Fidel suppresses the opposition press, radio, and television--in a land as "televised" as any on earth--imprisons up to 15,000 political enemies and frightens into exile scores more. Freedom of speech and assembly he limits to his friends. When opposition university students met they were assaulted by Fidelista students; crowds of young Fidelistas assaulted and threatened prominent Cubans who expressed opposition to Fidel. Only Communists are allowed to have a political party organization.

Workers, peasants, professional people, university students, and school children are formed into militia and indoctrinated by Fidel's political agitation specialists who orate about the evils of the old Cuba where "North Americans owned everything and thought of Cubans as slaves." They hear about "the lies that were told of United States assistance to Cuba in her war for independence against Spain" which they are told, "had been won by Cuban patriots long before the Yankees entered it to halt a nationalist Cuban revolution, ["We have wasted 60 years" is a Fidelista slogan] and to restore the old oligarchy and then to become the chief exploiters during an American Occupation deliberately prolonged." The government speakers expound their theme that the "United States always considered Cuba to be a colony for the supply of sugar and a captive market for American products."

As part of the multipronged attack on the United States, Fidel's editors and commentators describe this country as an aggressive neighbor. No incident is missed and some have been created "to prove" the United States is preparing to invade Cuba or to sponsor and finance an invasion by others.

Fidel rejects United States protests and he continues to refer in speeches to his original charges as if they never had been questioned. At major gatherings in Revolutionary Cuba, Fidel's guests of honor include Communists from many countries and the "delegates" of the "labor unions" in Communist China, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union where strikes are banned. In commenting upon major international conflicts Fidel and his press, radio, and television find Washington wrong and Moscow usually right. He has made it an offense (described as counterrevolutionary conduct) to oppose the Communists. But Fidel has said he is not a Communist. He claims he subscribes to no ideology except his own brand of humanism, and asks is it his fault if the Communists agree with him and help him. He is willing, he says, to take help wherever he finds it.

Fidelistas privately insist upon a distinction being made between Fidel and the Communists, though their goals and methods may seem indistinguishable. Fidel himself frequently condemns the practice of labeling as

Communist every effective radical reformer, particularly if he is a Latin American and anti-Yankee. Fidel calls himself a radical reformer who is changing a retarded unjust society which was so closely attached to the United States and so dependent on American trade that inevitably American property, prestige, and pride must be injured.

Fidel and his coterie thus continue to make virulent attacks upon the Government of the United States, its leaders, press, and business. They also continue to slash away at property interests in Cuba, the American system,¹⁴ neighboring regimes, and the traditional social forces of Latin America.¹⁵

If it is assumed that Fidel is convinced that the United States Government has decreed the liquidation of his Revolution and that the Cuban Revolution is in peril of being isolated in the hemisphere and destroyed by attacks from within and without, then Fidel's policies and conduct during this summer take on the character of defensive strategy in reaction to what he sees as an imminent danger. The possibilities he has seemed to fear most are sanctions by other republics of the hemisphere, counterrevolution, and economic warfare.

He fears the Organization of American States will adopt a resolution which is to be "sold" to them by the United States and "forced upon OAS members by the Department of State," proclaiming Cuba's Revolutionary Government a "menace" to hemispheric peace, "Communist-oriented," and "a base for subversion" and "interference" in the affairs of other Latin American republics.

He fears also that in support of an OAS denunciation civil strife will be fomented among the Cubans. Large funds are being used, say the Fidelistas, by the Central Intelligence Agency and other United States agencies to finance Cubans in exile and in their homeland who are willing to attack the revolutionary regime. Promises of such financial assistance are behind many of the recent defections, Fidelistas assert. They charge that CIA money is used to support anti-Castro propaganda in the United States, Cuba,

¹⁴ Fidel Castro in a speech indicated he was not bound by Cuba's commitments in the declarations of all American States in the Organization of American States (OAS).

¹⁵ The Church, the Army, and the landowners, United States investment capital, democracy, Western foreign policy, all have been offended in some way by the Cuban revolutionaries. Panama even was invaded by the Cubans. Panamanian elections are discredited. And relations with Spain have been strained since January 1960 when the Spanish Ambassador in Havana, Juan Pablo Lojendio, the Marquis of Vellisca, was declared persona non grata.

and elsewhere,¹⁶ and that private funds from a variety of sources, among them American corporations with interests in Cuba and other parts of Latin America, are used for the purchase of arms and for the training of anti-Castro rebel forces both inside and outside of Cuba.

Finally, Fidel fears that a concerted effort is under way, led by the Department of State and other agencies of the United States Government, to embarrass him economically by acts of sabotage in Cuba (the cane field burnings are cited by Fidelistas although old Caribbean hands regard them as a routine labor-saving device used during all cane harvests) and organized "calumnies" intended to deprive Cuba of tourist revenue. The American press, many Fidelistas seem to believe, deliberately lies about Cuba as part of a "campaign financed by the monopolists to strangle Cuba economically." They charge that an unofficial "blockade" managed from Washington imposes bank credit and trade restrictions upon Cubans, citing the refusal of New York banks to accept "normal" letters of credit from Cuban importers.

The content and tone of Fidel's speeches and the trend of his policies take on coherence if it is assumed that he sees such dangers to his regime. Under this assumption, his policies and acts¹⁷ can be interpreted as largely defensive, directed at forestalling, if he can, OAS action against him or at least at rallying as many supporters as possible among OAS member governments; at suppressing civil strife and counteracting adverse propaganda; and at frustrating the campaign to "choke" Cuba economically.

In consequence, Fidel has sought to undermine those Latin American governments which he cannot influence and to corral popular support in other Latin American countries whose governments might be induced to oppose United States moves in the OAS to isolate Cuba in the hemisphere. He sent President Dorticós and an official party to these latter countries, propagandists masquerading as ambassadors to others, and everywhere in the hemisphere he has welcomed the support of the Communists and their satellite groups who can beat the drums for Cuba. His reasoning seems to be that if isolation and civil war are inevitable he can at least prepare for them by

¹⁶ In Key West, Florida, long known for its many Cuban-American residents and one of the main gateways between Cuba and the mainland, an anti-Castro organization without visible local financial backing became active in May. Anti-Castro broadcasts are said to have been started by a number of radio stations outside Cuba with undisclosed financial backing. Anti-Castro leaflets have been scattered in Havana by at least one plane coming from Florida. Articles and lectures by anti-Castro Cuban refugees in the United States are said to have been financed generously by unknown benefactors. The statements of United States Congressmen printed in the American press after they had been briefed by the Executive Branch on the Cuban situation have contained obscure references to the need for patience while awaiting events in Cuba. Fidelistas have interpreted these as hints that the "events" are being "encouraged" in a way considered satisfactory by the Congressmen.

courting a loud and large reaction in his favor from Latin America and from the governments and people of Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and the Soviet bloc. For such a purpose the Communists are indispensable though of course Fidel also seeks assistance from non-Communists, such as President Sukarno of Indonesia.

In the economic sphere Fidel has acted like the leader of a country at war. He has cultivated every government offering the slightest assistance in combating the unofficial "blockade" of Cuba. His pacts with the Soviet Union and with Japan, the UAR, and with Soviet satellites, and others, his wooing of the "neutralist" countries, the restrictions he has imposed within Cuba upon imports and exports, on bank loans and on the use of divisas: all these can be interpreted as measures which would be taken to defend a "besieged" economy under direct attack from the mainland and threatened by inflation.

Fidel's domestic policy also is explicable as a reaction to danger. The agrarian reform has been converted from a program for the distribution of land to the landless into a means for transferring privately-owned farms, ranches, and plantations into state enterprises called co-operatives. The shift in emphasis to immediate production may have been made to frustrate the "political and economic conspiracies" he conceives to be against him. Fidel might well feel he had no alternative but to scrap his original agrarian reform program which could not have brought in additional produce or more divisas and which would have left in the hands of "enemy" landowners (individual and corporate, foreign and domestic) much more economic power than they have now.

¹⁷ Backers of Fidel in Cuba claim that the policies and acts most criticized there and abroad were adopted by the revolutionaries after "the conspiracy to destroy the Revolution" became apparent to them. They hold that United States policy toward the Cuban Revolution underwent radical change after the State Department saw the seriousness of the agrarian reform.

Many Fidelistas who had let their hair and beards grow during the insurrection against Batista, had them trimmed about a year ago when they announced "Fidel had shown his fidelity to the revolutionary program." And this is the time when other Fidelistas showed their opposition to the program and were removed by Fidel. (The period in question extends from early summer 1959 to early autumn of the same year.)

Since United States foreign policy is not being reviewed here the question of whether Fidel made a basic decision last year in response to Washington's changed attitude is not answered. But it should be noted that the Agrarian Reform Law as first made public in May contained a vital limitation on expropriations of land for co-operatives (a euphemism for state ownership and control) and that this was removed in the official version of the law in June. Also Fidel's tour of eastern United States earlier that spring which brought no policy talks in Washington, sometimes is given as "the crucial turning point" of the Revolution.

Additionally, if, in his assessment of the dangers he faced from the outside, he were led to seek Communist assistance wherever he might find it--in the trade pacts and in the world-wide power blocs they offered--there might follow, as I have suggested, the growing influence of the Communists inside Cuba. This would be the price Fidel would pay for the external aid he felt he needed for survival. With the Communists thus assured of greater power over the revolutionary program than their numbers or influence warranted, the "communization" of Fidel's Revolution could result. In like manner, Fidelista propaganda, the Cuban press, and foreign policy would come under Communist direction or influence.

Fidel's preference for collaborators and bureaucrats with no strong ties to the United States can be described as another defensive policy in preparation for the dangers he foresees. And it also would place Cuba's Communists in a preferred position for jobs.

The Cubans' ambivalent feelings toward the United States which Fidel seems to comprehend, and the complex of personal and commercial relationships of Cubans and North Americans, hence are discussed by Fidel in terms of "loyalty" to his Revolution. A Cuban who has close ties to America is suspect.

For many generations the Cubans had corrupt government and many were corrupted. For some 60 years they had limited independence: Cuba was under United States supervision in varying degrees and by various methods. For a quarter of a century the United States retained a legal right to intervene in Cuba. For more than a half century the American Ambassador in Havana could influence Cuban politics and Cubans seeking to advance their careers consulted him.

During most of that time dictators flourished in Cuba. Their harsh, often barbarous, tactics seemed to their Cuban victims to be condoned by the United States. The American press seldom showed much interest in what the dictators were doing to Cubans. Little notice was given to what Fulgencio Batista did in the closing years of his regime to retain power and to drain away millions in Cuban resources as monumental graft while murdering and torturing in wild, indiscriminate frenzy as opposition, under Fidel Castro, mounted. There was no real condemnation of Batista from Washington. He seemed to Cubans to retain American backing; he received substantial American military assistance long after he had become utterly unacceptable to most Cubans.

Meanwhile, over the years, North American business, culture, customs, and education overshadowed the islanders who were patronized and tutored by their mainland neighbors, many of them acting in good faith. The American naval base established in eastern Cuba was and is an economic necessity to several substantial Cuban communities. American businessmen and bankers

were dominant or highly influential in the sugar business, Cuba's most important. At regular intervals the American Congress decrees how much sugar and at what favored prices the Cubans may sell in the United States. In the past, when sugar was scarce, the Cubans were expected to favor, as in fact they did, their mainland customers.

Could relationships flourishing in such an atmosphere, Fidel seems to be saying, produce Cubans of position and education with a will and with the energy and capabilities to serve a revolutionary movement when it seeks to divorce Cuba from her marriage to the United States?

The Cuban Revolution was an indigenous movement. Educated, capable, honorable, courageous Cubans, not Communists, started the revolt against Batista and carried it to victory. They risked their lives, fortunes, and honor. They subscribed to Fidel's revolutionary reforms.

Fidel reached power on January 1, 1959, with the full support of the Cuban people. They agreed with the program he had said he would follow to reform Cuba's economy, government, and social system. The revolutionary program Fidel actually is imposing on the Cubans clearly does not have such unanimous support. In subsequent reports I shall try to show how this change came about, to show how Fidel's hard-core nationalists have altered, how a revolutionary movement which started as wholly Cuban has changed.

The Cold War so suddenly resumed with the Summit failure in Paris in mid-May brought from the United States Government its first hard reaction to Fidel's Revolution--the cancellation by President Eisenhower of American assistance programs in Cuba, in themselves insignificant. The Cold War, however, could force upon Fidel a clarification of his position, and this could bring the definitive explanation for the changes he made in the Revolution.

The Soviet aim as widely believed and until recently openly discussed in Cuba is to make of that island a Western Hemisphere Hungary with the United States cast in the role of the intervening oppressor. When Cubans were allowed to publish their case against the Communists the main charge was that the Communists were willing to sacrifice Cuba for Soviet interests by embroiling the Cubans with the United States in a conflict they couldn't win.

Various warnings appeared in print in Cuba. In a front-page editorial on January 16, 1960, El Diario de la Marina, which later was closed by the revolutionaries, warned that the Communists were "infiltrating" the Castro movement. "The Communists deny they intend to convert the Revolution into something resembling the collectivism of Russia, Yugoslavia or China," the editorial said, "but secretly this is their plan" Only the most extreme anti-Communist antirevolutionaries in Cuba charge Fidel Castro with being a part of a Communist-Soviet conspiracy. Cubans who suspect the worst of the Communists persist in their faith in Fidel as a nationalist who never would join in any act against his country.

Thus if the Cold War should bring a quickening of the plot (if one exists) with the Communists ordered to hasten a showdown with the United States and Fidel becomes aware of what is happening, he might have to take a firm stand opposing the Communists, a stand for moderating the campaign against the United States. The development of such a crisis situation involving the United States could force Fidel to take his "ultimate position." And such a crisis becomes more likely with the resumption of the Cold War.¹⁸

Another way of presenting Fidel's dilemma is to say that a crisis in Cuban-American relations could bring a climax within Cuba with Fidel being forced to come down from the clouds and take his stand on one side or the other.

In the Latin American tradition of "the Leader" he gets personal appeals from Cubans in all kinds of trouble; his mail is enormous and contains countless letters from "the little people" who look upon Cuba's leader as the only man in the country who counts. They consult him about the health of their relatives, their livestock, their hopes for a better house, and they tell him about their thieving neighbors or the heartless government delegate who will not give them the land Fidel promised.

In many Cuban homes a picture of Fidel has an honored place; in some of them it is a photograph of a bearded youth who seems to be wearing a kind of halo; the resemblance to portraits of Christ is notable. And in the minds of some of his countrymen Fidel is a godlike caudillo who never is responsible for the evils and errors of his colleagues: Fidel couldn't possibly be aware of what is happening in Cuba, they say. In that sense Cubans place Fidel in the clouds. In that sense he may have to come down to make some hard decisions if the Cold War stimulates the Communists into taking greater and greater risks with Cuba's destiny.

¹⁸ Joseph Newman of the New York Herald Tribune, in a series of reports on Cuba in April 1960, found a battle under way among the Cubans "over the future form of the republic. It could decide whether Cuba will become a socialist-type state . . . sympathetic to the Soviet Union, Communist China, and Leftist movements in Africa, the Middle East and Asia or whether it will seek some middle course . . . remaining closely associated with the United States and the other American republics." Americans Waldo Frank and Carleton Beals, the organizers of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee in New York, published advertisements denying that "a pro-Communist state has been established in Cuba with the clear objective of bargaining with Soviet Russia for the munitions of war" and denying that "in Cuba, Castro is stealing American property with impunity," and denying that "all that remains is for Castro to give the word, and the Terror, the ruthless hunting down and shooting of Fidel's opponents, will begin." The advertisements suggested "that there are, in the United States, powerful interests bent on frustrating the primary purpose of the Revolution: to give Cuba back to the Cubans."

Cuba's Communists standing alone could not bring about these decisive changes in Cuba. They were and are few in number and in prestige. Their "Popular Socialist Party" had perhaps some 3,000 members that counted. But if there were or are 30,000 members, would that be many in a populace of 4,000,000 Cubans over fifteen years of age?

What if as many as ten per cent of these Cubans should be enrolled within Communist ranks: Would not some 90 per cent still call themselves Roman Catholics? And if the Revolution began with 95 per cent of these people behind it, and today has possibly up to 50 or 60 per cent support, how can it be called Communist, as many Cubans do call it? The question if put in another way carries its own answer: How would Fidel's Revolution differ were it run only by and for the Communists?

While traveling in Cuba I have observed the tragic self-questioning of the people, their incredulity and unwillingness to believe Fidel could deceive or desert them. But there are Cubans, and I believe their number is increasing, who no longer ask questions of themselves, for they no longer believe in Fidel. They have ceased to listen to Fidel's repeated appeals or explanations.

As early as last spring Fidel's appearance on a popular television question-and-answer show was announced well in advance. The time was 9 p.m. on a weekday night. A University of Havana professor and a columnist in the newspaper Prensa Libre (subsequently taken over by Fidelistas) reported on what happened.

The professor had a class scheduled for 9 p.m. In the past, he told me, whenever a class and a televised Fidel oration conflicted, the class was suspended. Professor and students were expected to listen to Fidel and most of them wanted to. But by the night of which I write the professor had had enough of Fidel and he decided to appear in his classroom 30 minutes before 9 p.m. to show those students who might be present that if they wished they could attend the class.

"When the time came to begin, the room was nearly filled," he said, "and I gave my lecture. Later, one of the students commented that I had seemed exceptionally cheerful. I denied it, of course, but it was clear to him, to me, and to the majority of the students present that we were engaged in showing how we had come to feel about Fidel."

The Prensa Libre columnist wrote the next day that the night before he had started to move about Havana at 9 p.m. And as he passed a track where dogs were being raced, a cinema, and a sporting event, he had "observed," he wrote, "that we Cubans were very prosperous and gay. Every place I went between 9 and 10 p.m. there were large crowds of happy, interested spectators Prime Minister Castro appeared on television beginning at 9 p.m."

So much then for Fidel's policies and Cuban reactions. The truly naïve country-cousin-type Cuban is rare. So also is the Cuban who can be made to hate anyone for a long time, who feels against other Cubans or against North Americans such strong lasting resentment that he can believe what Fidel tells him about the past conduct and future plans of the "counterrevolutionaries" and "Yankee monopolists." Yet there certainly was a time not long ago, when Fidel spoke truly for nine Cubans out of ten.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Irving Flaum". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the main text block.