



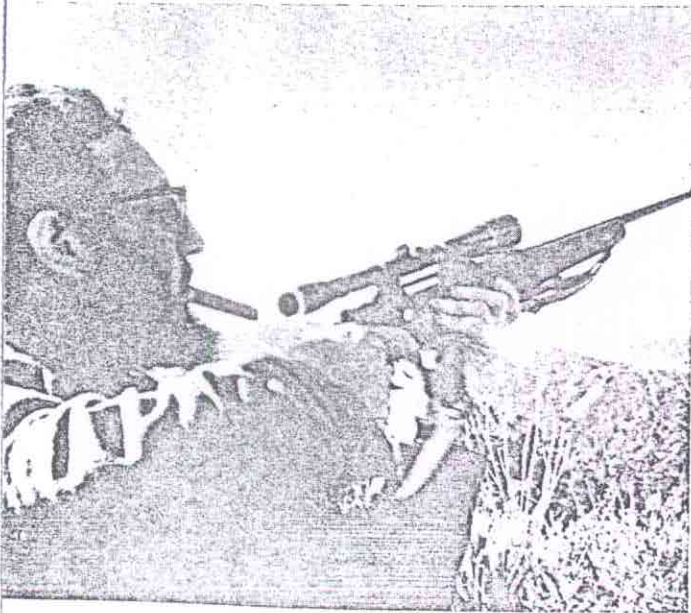
FURNISHING GUNS TO REVOLUTIONISTS
IS AN ANCIENT AMERICAN BUSINESS,
HONORABLE OR NOT DEPENDING ON
YOUR POINT OF VIEW. NOT ALL
CASTRO GUNS COME FROM THE
STATES . . . BUT SOME DO

By WILLIAM B. EDWARDS

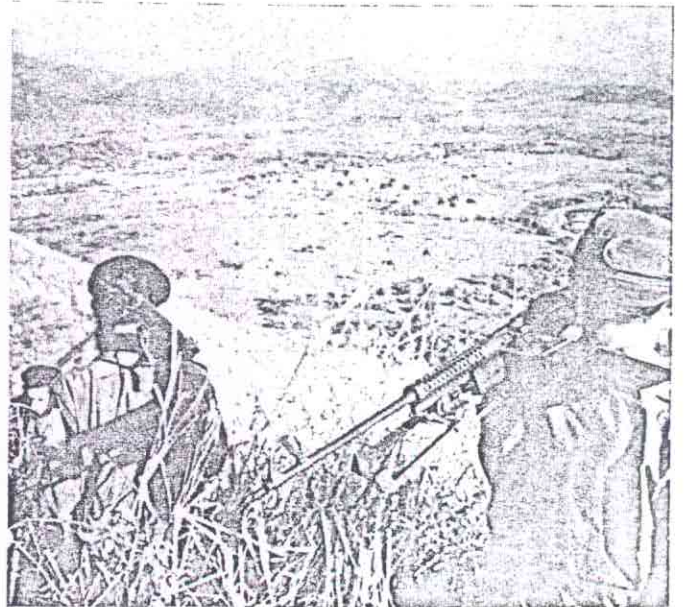
"Guns"
3/59
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WHERE CASTRO

FN Mauser sporter and cigar are Castro's "trademarks." Here he traces attacking route taken by his fighters (right below.)



Castro uses favorite FN sporter with great skill. The scope sight is probably a Weaver K6 in Buehler top mounts.



Rebels in Provisional Army, called the "Movement of July 26," descend from hills to raid army; carry Johnson LMGs.



Home-made "Sten" guns are seized by US agents in California, while Castro jubilant in victory and men have FN's, Johnsons, M1s.



GETS HIS GUNS

SPUTTERING SOUTH of the United States like a fuse on a powder-keg which threatened to blow up the Monroe Doctrine, was the Revolution in Cuba. Led by young, bearded Fidel Castro, who has spent his fortune on guns, Castro kept going in spite of late *Presidente* Fulgencio Batista's efforts to dislodge him. How the revolt has kept going in spite of the opposition of the modern Cuban army is a story which has come near to embarrassing the United States government.

—With Fidel's installing of Sr. Manuel Urrutia Lleo as rebel president, and their appeal to the world for recognition of their belligerent status under international law, the Cuban freedom fight might have become another Korea. Attempts to involve Communist arms and Communist influence in the revolutionary movement—which Castro's forces blame on Batista—could have meant U.S. intervention. But the revolt remained local. A few U.S. citizens have been indicted for shipping guns to Cuba, as have citizens of a dozen other Western Hemisphere nations who sympathized in cash and arms with Castro. And regardless of the merits or demerits of armed insurrection against the internationally-recognized Havana government, Castro's hideaway army in the "Big Mountains,"—the Sierra Maestra of Cuba's eastern Oriente province—furnished a good lesson on how to survive despite the operations of a stronger military force.

Arrayed against Castro were the arms of Batista's 30,000 soldiers. They used U.S. standard guns: M1 rifles and Springfields caliber .30; Thompson subs and .45 pistols; and of course light and heavy Brownings in .30 and .50 calibers. Mortars in 60mm and 81mm sizes are also used.

As a member of the western hemisphere defense organizations, Batista had in the past received arms on credit from the U. S. Cuba has no munitions factories. But since March, 1958, Batista no longer could buy on credit.

Newspaper readers may have noticed during March 1958 a squib about 1,000 Garand rifles being held up in New York, export licenses refused by our State Department. They were consigned to the recognized Batista government. Why the State Department refused to let them out is a secret locked in Munitions Control Division files. But with these arms stopped, Batista turned to other commercial sources for arms. I have seen an order given a large U.S. munitions broker, said to be of guns for Batista, which requires 1,500 M1 rifles, many other arms, and quantities of ammunition for a "shooting war," all in U.S. standard calibers. While "State Department export license is assured" on this order, it is not known that Batista had any success in getting them. More recently, an order for .45 automatics "for Havana Police" was stopped by State Department. Meanwhile, shipments of arms continued going to Castro.



Castro lookout keeps eye on road leading to Sierra Maestra hideaway; has FN Mauser.

The Cuban rebel arms agents are not suckers, and there were no fabulous profits to be made in smuggling arms to the rebels. But occasionally incompetent "gun runners" do get into the act. In Miami some months ago, two men were arrested in a motel with hand grenades which they were loading with black powder and homemade fuses. According to Florida gun cranks' scuttlebutt—Miami is filled with Cuban agents—the two erstwhile gun runners had driven to the Everglades to test their fuses. The grenade fuse assemblies were reprimed with shotgun caps, and fused with lengths of dynamite fuse. The grenade bodies were filled with black powder and the fuse assemblies screwed in.

But such gadgets are more dangerous to the grenadier than to his enemy. Flash-by of the primer cap past the dynamite fuse often set off the grenades as quickly as they are thrown. Ordnance grenade fuses are varnished and sealed against such flash-by, and loose sporting black powder is *not* the correct filler for hand grenades. Meanwhile, in Cuba, revolutionary fighters died because they did not have grenades. These were the young men of the Havana-area *Directorio*, the students' revolutionary movement.

Censorship in Havana gradually reduced the Cuban "crisis" of last spring from front to back pages, but the *Directorio* attack on the Presidential Palace made the headlines. Several trucks loaded with members of the *Directorio* crashed the gates, submachine guns sputtering. But Batista was not in residence, and the attack failed from lack of firepower. Rebellion, like good government, cannot succeed unless it is organized. The palace attack was not

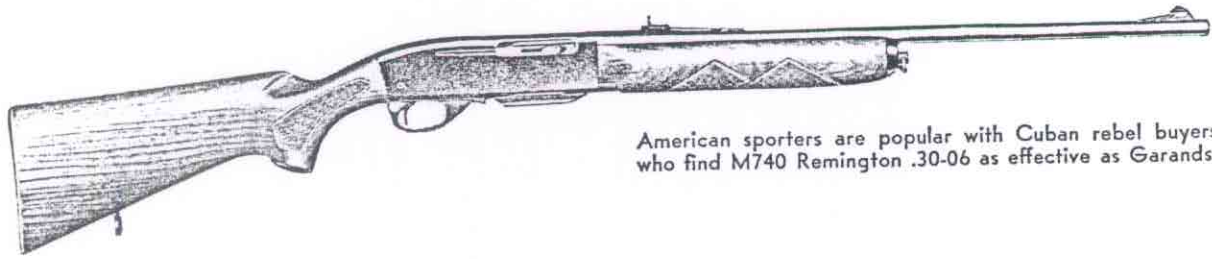


Sergeant Batista was raised to chief of staff in 1933 after army revolt that he helped lead.

organized. Since that time, when he suspended the promised November free elections, Batista had taken to riding around in a heavily armored truck. Meanwhile, the *Directorio* set out to get grenades. The seizure of the bombs in the Miami motel by F.B.I. agents delayed their supply. But according to reports of the kind of grenades being made, it was probably a good thing for them that they never got there!

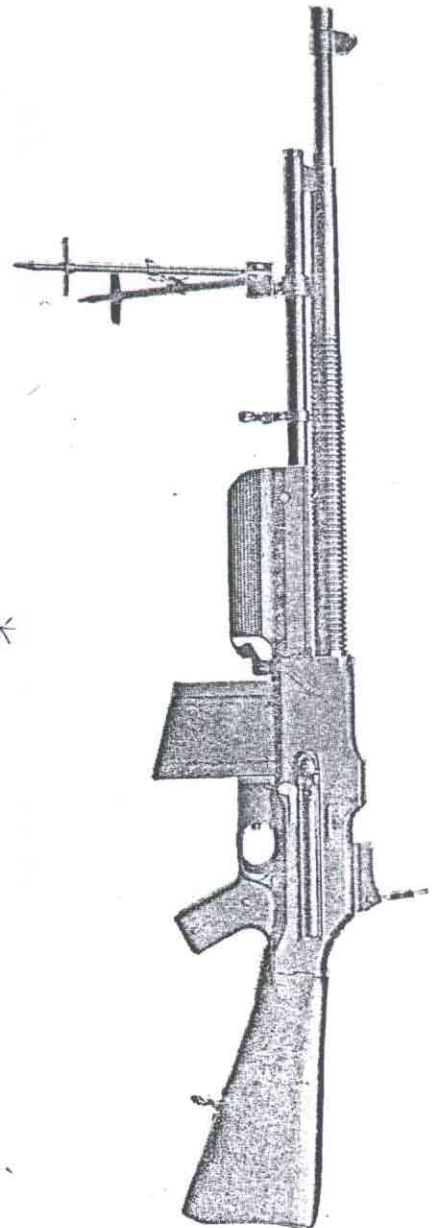
When I discussed some of the newspaper F.B.I. claims to capturing "50 per cent of the guns shipped to Castro," with a friend in Central Intelligence, I asked him if this really meant that "Uncle Sam lets half of the guns go through." His reply jolted me a little. Without any argument, he said, "That would be one way to state it." Some corroboration for this idea occurred with the confiscation in August, 1957, of a quantity of Italian Carcano 7.35mm rifles at the home of Gil DeGibaja in Miami. An American citizen of Cuban descent, DeGibaja was charged with violating the Neutrality Act, since the arms and ammo were believed bound for Cuba. Later, Miami newspaper columnists pretending to be in the know, published that the Cubans "no longer were interested" in buying Italian rifles. But the fact is that Castro's representatives have repeatedly and publicly stated that what they want are U.S. standard caliber arms which can be easily supplied with ammunition captured from the Batista troops. And while the Italian guns caught the attention of Miami's federal agents, dollars to doughnuts a big shipment of .30-06 and .45 caliber weapons were allowed to slip through.

*
Bueli



American sporters are popular with Cuban rebel buyers who find M740 Remington .30-06 as effective as Garands.

The newspapers have often in the course of the revolution made mention of something or other that would lead the reader to assume the Communists were behind Castro. The time Batista himself ran for office on the Cuban Communist Party ticket is forgotten. Last summer a New York newspaper columnist declared "Czech Guns Used By Cuban Rebels! Czech machine guns are in use by Castro . . ." The fact is, that Czech rifles are very popular in Cuba. These same Czech rifles have been available in the U.S. as ordinary commercial imports, but were halted back in 1950 when we put the freeze on doing business with Czechoslovakia. Meanwhile, Castro's agents go to Mexico for arms. The Czech sporters are popular for hunting. There, where a secret rebel training camp operates, sporting rifles of the Cz 47 pattern, a neatly-styled modified Mauser in .30-06 caliber, are issued to revolutionary recruits. A cargo of these rifles plus boots, clothing, radios, and other gear so needed by the mountain fighters, was seized by Havana government officers in April, 1958, from the yacht *El Corojo*. But none of the new-type she 50 Czech military rifles are in use by Castro. This was denied in Chicago as recently as December, 1958, by President Urrutia on his way to Oriente Province to assume his office. The claims of Soviet-influence guns in the Castro rebellion were strictly "red herrings," was the sum of his statements. He was right: the Russian and Czech guns take special cartridges which are very good, but not standard anywhere in the west. After the first ammunition ran out, they could not have been used. To discredit the revolution, Batista arranged with the Dominican Republic to receive five cargo plane loads of arms. The rebels heard of the move and put on a surprise party when the planes landed, so the newspapers carried the story, "Batista Gets Dominican Guns." But as usual the papers had only half the story. For the arms were Czech military rifles, which the Dominicans had bought to send to Batista, and which he intended to "plant" on dead revolutionaries (Continued on page 58) *



"Ametralladora Colt" is prime arm for base of fire. Few guns are in use, surplus from other Latin states.



Surplus Colt .45 automatics from England bounced through US on way to Cuba but were seized by dictator Batista's troops before getting into rebels' hands.

CASTRO'S GUNS

(Continued from page 33)

for the newspapers to write about. Since the rebels knew of the plan, it was foiled. Not only did Batista fail in proving Communist intervention—Castro's people have steadily refused such aid—but he wound up with five loads of guns he couldn't get ammo for!

Castro's forces are well supplied with machine guns. Many of these are types used in various other South American republics. Best of these is unquestionably the "Fucile Ametralladora Colt," or the Colt Monitor, commercial version of the popular Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR.). During the 1930's, Colt sold many of these guns to Latin America. From Latin America, offered by persons sympathetic with La Revolucion, they are coming into Cuba. Most of these are .30-06 caliber. A few guns, such as the Danish-made Madsen light machine guns in 7mm caliber as used in South America, take other calibers. But all guns in use take either U.S. ammunition, or cartridges easily found in Cuba.

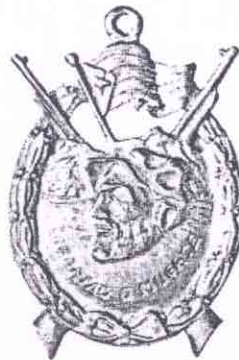
In the pleasant, grassy uplands of eastern Cuba which Castro controls and which he is even now trying to rule until all of Cuba is consolidated again, a variety of rifles are in use. Ads in U.S. journals help supply these guns. Active in the trade are people in Miami, for example, who insert notices "Wanted: Springfields, M1 Garands, Carbines, Top prices paid." But the "top prices" are not showing any huge profits: the Cuban agents pay little more than the going price for arms. Garand rifles they buy for from \$50 to \$100. Often the same gun will bring more on the U.S. shooter's and collector's market than the Cuban buyer will offer. Recently, with the D.C.M. price increase in Garand rifles to over \$160 automatically increasing the value of Garands in shooters' hands to over \$100, the Cuban buyers have turned to commercial sporters for their military needs.

The .30-06 Remington Model 740 autoloading rifle has turned up in the Cuban hills, as well as many other sporting guns commonly found in the U.S. market. The FN Mauser is Castro's favorite personal rifle, while Johnson semi-automatic sporters, with scope sights, are much liked in Cuba. Along with Springfield and Enfield rifles, in .30-06 caliber, the Remington bolt action 721 and Winchester Model 70 share honors in the hands of Castro's band. A tribute to the strength of the Remington Model 721 action is a special carbine which one of Castro's headquarters guard has made to fire grenades. The barrel is chopped to about 15 inches, and grenades made from hand-smithed iron canisters are fired from it with rifle accuracy, from the shoulder.

In Cuba, Castro has few ordnance men. Some are Americans, but few are expert. Since submachine guns were difficult to obtain in the quantity needed, Castro's U.S. agents arranged for some to be manufactured in the U.S. Last May Lynwood, Calif., police raided a residential area garage, found it contained a home hobby machine shop turning out Sten-type SMGs. Eleven guns, sixty barrels and hundreds of parts of sub-machine guns "which authorities believe may have been destined for Fidel Castro" were taken in this raid. Whether Castro has decided that manufacture of machine guns in

the U.S. is accompanied by legal dangers, and since imported some sharp Yankee tool makers and a few lathes with gasoline generator, is not known. But it would be a logical next step. For Fidel Castro and his brother Raul have been learning revolution the slow, leisurely "mañana" way. They have made mistakes, and they have paid for them in money and blood.

But they have learned. At one time Cubans living in the U.S. were so naive as to consider converting .30-40 Krag rifles to .30-06. They gave that idea up, and turned to Garands in quantity. But these proved difficult to get so the commercial sporters came next. Meanwhile, Castro has improved his stature in international politics. Recently he protested the release to Batista of aircraft



Liberation of Cuba medal shows Castro, rifles.

Courtesy AFACo

fuel from the U.S. base at Guantanamo. Newspaper accounts declared that Batista had obtained "jet planes from Britain." Actually, these were Vampire night fighters, surplus from the Canadian airforce a year or two ago. With cruising speed of 549 m.p.h. and range of over 700 miles (over 1200 miles with wing tanks), the Vampires are good planes when they don't blow up accidentally. Each carries four 20mm rapid fire cannon. Some have been bought by U.S. enthusiasts, cost about \$9,000 to put in the air.

According to a leading aircraft broker in the U.S., these jets were sold to a mid-west dealer who in turn sold them to a Mexico City merchant. From there they were flown to Batista. Castro protested about the gasoline deal: he has four Vampire jets in the hills himself, which are as useless without fuel as if they had no wings.

Suddenly, as GUNS Magazine goes to press, the Revolution becomes an accomplished fact. Castro is entering Havana, and the U.S. has recognized his government.

The success of Fidel Castro's arms over the superior equipment of Batista's U.S.-equipped forces attest to the potential for victory inherent in the popularly supported change of government. Free elections—which Batista refused to hold after promising the world he would do so—are the key to peaceful changes in central administration. But when a government becomes destructive of what our own Founding Fathers considered inalienable rights, and what 4,000 Cubans have given their lives for, force may be the only way to right wrongs. Certainly the Cuban revolt seems to have concluded with as much inspiration and patriotic fervor, as with bloodshed. And the Great Democracy of the North has had as much to do with the victory of

popular sovereignty in Cuba as any single factor. For only in the U.S. where such commodities as modern sporting rifles (forbidden in, say, England) and that curious offspring of law, the Dewat machine gun, exist side by side, could revolutionary patriots turn for arms with no strings attached. The absence of "strings" has throughout the Revolution characterized Uncle Sam's attitude. Surprisingly, Batista, overthrown in the 11th hour and fleeing the country, laid blame for his defeat (with his army regiments joyfully surrendering forts and cities to Castro) to the rebel leader's "better weapons." *Ex-presidente* Fulgencio's parting declaration is that Castro's motley array of Dewats, chopped off Yankee sporters, Latin American surplus machine guns by makers most people never heard of, constitute "better weapons" than his. And Batista's modern army, now largely gone over to the Revolution, had new U.S. Brownings, M-8 armored cars, 81mm mortars, and other first-class gear!

Yet, in the end, perhaps Batista was right. For the total infantry weapon is not just the rifle, or pistol, or machine gun; it is the *man-plus-weapon* which counts. That Castro's thousand-man force triumphed, is a lesson that it counts for pretty much.

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