

BOOKS AND THE ARTS

The Pearl of the Antilles

by Harrison E. Salisbury

The problem of Castro and the Cuban Revolution is the obstinacy with which it refuses to fit into any neat ideological or philosophical category.

This, essentially, is what makes it such a headache for policy-makers and analysts. And it is a problem which is not confined simply to Washington and the West. The dialectical task forces in Moscow and Peking have just as much difficulty in their efforts to provide a logical Marxian underpinning for the events in the island once known as the Pearl of the Antilles.

It is precisely this contrariety of Cuba which shines through almost every

Castroism: Theory and Practice
by Theodore Draper
(Praeger; \$5.45)

page of Mr. Draper's latest effort to find some kind of generalization underlying the surface disorder, the gap between expressed intentions and realized deeds, the zigzagging, the hypocrisy, the cant and the confusion which have marked Cuba's political course since New Year's Day, 1959.

In a sense it is regrettable that despite intense scholarship, close personal inquiry and an unusually rich background of experience in Marxian dialectic, Theodore Draper is unable to find a coherent key to Castroism. The need for a simple and reliable cipher by which to decode the turbulent events not only of the Caribbean but of other politically immature areas of the world, such as Asia, Africa and the Middle East, becomes more and more pressing. The angry turmoil which swirls around America's actions in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic is only the latest evidence of the difficulty which we confront in attempting to cope, in a more or less principled way, with situations which,

if we may rely on Mr. Draper's inquiry into Cuba as a guide, defy reason, rationality and principle.

The principle upon which we have relied in Vietnam and in the Dominican Republic (and earlier in Cuba) is a simple one: to "resist Communism." Nothing seems more simple than that. Unfortunately, as Mr. Draper points out, nothing could be more complex in actual practice.

Let us examine a few of the Cuban contradictions which Mr. Draper documents here:

According to Communist (Marxist) theory the leading force in Communist Revolution is the working class or proletariat. In fact, Cuba's highly unionized and relatively well-paid working class played almost no role in the Revolution.

According to Marxist theory revolution is set off by increasing conflict between the classes, intensified by more and more exploitation of labor and a decreasing living standard. In fact, Cuba in the 1950's experienced prosperity and a boom in which all classes in Cuban society shared.

Communists regard countries with low living standards and harsh repression as the best seedground for Revolution. In fact, Cuba ranked among the first four Latin American countries in per capita income.

Exploitation by "imperialist capitalist" forces is regarded by Marxists as a precondition for revolution. Cuba is cited as an example par excellence of American exploitation, especially in sugar. But, as Mr. Draper notes, it is easy to overestimate sugar and the American role in it. While sugar was Cuba's principal export it contributed only about 16 percent to the national income. The US investment in Cuban sugar resources was enormous—but it was rapidly declining (from 70 per-

cent ownership in 1928 to about 35 percent in 1958—about 5 percent of the Cuban industrial establishment). American companies employed only about 70,000 of the 2,000,000 Cuban labor force. Wages and working conditions in US establishments were the best in the country; unionization of these establishments was exceptionally high.

What about the role of the Cuban peasantry? While Marx expected the proletariat to make the Revolution was, perhaps, Cuba an example of the "new" Chinese-type Revolution in which the peasant, not the worker, carries the main burden? This has often been contended. Indeed, Castro and some of his ideologues have in recent years advanced the theory that Cuba was an example of a "peasant revolution". But, as Stalin used to say, facts are stubborn things. And Mr. Draper demonstrates conclusively that peasant participation in the Revolution was insignificant, regardless of how they may have expected to benefit once the Revolution got underway.

Of the 50,000 peasants in the Sierra Maestra, for example, probably not more than 500 joined in Castro's struggle (and this only as it approached success). Of the 500,000 agricultural workers in the country as a whole it appears that fewer than 1,000 had any hand in the revolutionary events.

Despite Castro's efforts (and those of his erstwhile colleague, Ernesto Che Guevara) to cloak the Cause with a mantle of "agrarian revolution" Mr. Draper makes it perfectly clear that there was, in fact, no national peasant uprising, no movement comparable to the Zapata peasant revolutionary outbreak in Mexico in 1910, nothing like the Pugachev rising in Czarist Russia, no deep peasant roots and peasant participation such as characterized Mao's success in China.

Where, then, did the Cuban Revolution get its strength?

Mr. Draper's answer is incontestable: "Outside the immediate vicinity of the

guerrilla forces, revolutionary activity in the country as a whole was largely a middle-class phenomenon, with some working-class support but without working-class organization.

How does this fit in with theories of the Communist Revolution and take-over? Not at all. The only thing it remotely resembles is Marx's hypothetical description of a "bourgeois" revolution which, he thought, would precede the Communist or Proletarian Revolution.

Mr. Draper's analysis of the Castro propaganda and "program" prior to his take-over fits the definition of "bourgeois" far better than "communist." Its ideological content is light. Over the period 1953-1959 it displayed a steady drift toward the right. It was reformist, rather than radical. It stressed its intimacy with traditional Cuban political movements. Its guerrilla aspect was miniscule (and far from convinced). It depended enormously on The Leader and his charisma — and this was openly stressed by Castro.

It is hardly without significance that the Castro program and tactics were almost always in direct contrast to the program and tactics of the Cuban Communist Party and that this conflict by no means vanished with Castro's coming to power.

How then to explain Castro's success? Mr. Draper finds the answer more in Batista than in Castro; more in the national mood of Cuba than in the tactics of the revolutionaries; more in the tidal surge of events than in conspiracy. And here there may be one element of the key for which the statesmen search. It lies not on the revolutionary side of the equation but on the side of the status quo.

For example, as history has been idealized and falsified by the Communists (and their opponents), it would seem that the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia as a result of magnificent leadership, careful timing, remarkable insight, popular demand, courage, initiative and skill. To this picture the opponents of the Com-

munists add: Secrecy, Conspiracy, Duplicity, Iron Discipline, etc.

The truth, however, is something rather different. Russia's February (non-Communist) Revolution occurred because the existing Czarist Government disintegrated. No revolutionary leader of consequence was even in the country (Lenin was in Switzerland, Trotsky in New York and Stalin in Siberia). None of them had the faintest notion that Russia was On the Brink. Lenin, indeed, was despondent.

But, under the impact of war, the Czarist system fell apart. It succeeded in alienating its strongest defenders — the nobility, the Army, the industrialists. Even the Imperial family had begun to line up against the Czar. Thus, the February Revolution occurred without plan, without conspiracy, without leaders.

But what of the Communist seizure of power following November 7? Surely, this was a skillful coup d'état carried on by a secretive group of revolutionary plotters with Lenin at the head. Again, the reality bears little resemblance to the legend. Everyone in Petrograd knew the coup was to be attempted. The plans had been published in the Petrograd press (several leading Bolsheviks had quit the party in a public row over Lenin's proposal). The Bolsheviks won not because of their skill but because the feeble Kerensky regime was staggering toward collapse.

Nothing that happened in Russia fitted Marx's prescription for Revolution any more than did the events in Cuba. An analysis of Mao and the China Revolution would adduce much the same kind of evidence.

Regardless of how he happened to come to power is it not true that Castro is today and has been for some time a Communist?

This question, essential to an understanding of the evolution of the Cuban events, is analyzed with equal clarity by Mr. Draper. It is not necessary to follow the tortuous course by which Castro has attempted to give a false consistency to his policies and programs to see very quickly that beginning some time within his first year in power Castro adopted a more and more Communist course of action. To agrarian problems he applied collec-

tive and state solutions familiar to anyone in Eastern Europe. He imported Soviet techniques wholesale and attempted to adapt them to Cuban industry and the Cuban state. He himself and his theorists, Che Guevara in particular, busied themselves evolving an ideology which, Mr. Draper clearly establishes, suited various current political needs, but had little relationship to reality, and sometimes none at all.

Out of this maze of contrasts and contradictions a few important conclusions can be drawn.

The first and probably most vital is that revolutions are deep and powerful movements within a society which bear no necessary relationship to individual revolutionary movements or leaders. The guidelines of Marxian analysis are of no great help in studying these upsurges because they generate forces which take widely differing courses.

The success of the "revolution" depends much more on the disintegration of the existing regime or social system than it does upon a revolutionary clique or elite.

Once the process gets underway, however, it provides a setting in which a political figure of skill, daring and charisma, may take command. Lenin is one example, Tito another, Castro a third. Each of these diverse men have one trait in common: their brilliant sense of political expediency. While each called (or now calls) himself a Marxist each was quite willing to evoke non-Marxist policies for the sake of getting or keeping himself in power. Lenin calmly adopted the agrarian program of his hated enemies, the Socialist Revolutionaries. Later, he invited the capitalists back into Russia during the New Economic Policy. Tito went to the West for military and economic aid to hold his power against the challenge of another Communist (Stalin). Castro keeps his faltering economy going with increasingly intimate collaboration with fascist Franco.

The second lesson is that revolutions and revolutionary movements are as individual as the countries in which they occur. Each may draw on the common stock of so-called Marxist expedients just as the revolutions of the 19th Century drew so liberally on the common stock of expedients which

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were the heritage of revolutionary France and revolutionary England. But each gives to its revolution and its system (we are speaking here of revolutionary flavor which stems from the charisma and not those pseudorevolutions such as were imposed by the Red Army on Eastern European countries) a particular national flavor and a personal flavor which stems from the charisma of the revolutionary figure who emerges at the helm of the state.

Unless we can, in some measure, rid ourselves of the utilitarian notion that all revolutions are "made in Moscow" and proceed according to some gigantic "Communist blueprint," there seems small hope that we will manage to evolve policies more effective than those which have proved so costly and so inept in Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Vietnam.

As Mr. Draper rightly concludes:

"In Cuban history, as it happens, the struggles for freedom have been long ones, with many ups and downs, repeated setbacks, and ultimate victories. . . . The Cuban people, not the exiles, not the United States, represent the principal factor in the present struggle.

"It is not that the Cuban people can win by themselves; they need all the help they can get from the exiles, from the United States, and from everyone else. But the struggle cannot be won without them or against them. . . .

"If we had done nothing more than avoid these gross miscalculations (the Bay of Pigs, etc.) we would be far better off today; if we do not repeat them, we will be far better off tomorrow.

"A great deal can be gained simply by letting Castro make more mistakes and by making fewer ourselves."

To an activist Chief Executive or an eager-beaver Secretary of State or an ambitious military adviser this may sound too much like sitting back and "letting the dust settle." To which it may be suggested that there are worse things than patience and fortitude. A more activist policy may stir up a good deal more than dust. It may, in fact, bring tumbling down the whole deli-

cate structure of balance and counter-balance on which the world now so precariously rests.

One thing Mr. Draper brilliantly documents: If we are to deal effectively with a rapidly changing world and with a whole series of states which are in tran-

The two best spy stories in English are John Buchan's *Mr. Standfast* (1919), whose hero is Dick Hannay; and W. Somerset Maugham's *Ashenden* (1927), which is about a British spy called Ashenden who bears a strong resemblance to Somerset Maugham. Most secret agents who have since appeared in fiction have, as it were, the Hannay nose and the Ashen-

The James Bond Dossier
by Kingsley Amis
(New American Library; \$3.95)
The Looking Glass War
by John Le Carré
(Coward-McCann; \$4.95)

den mouth. They display traits of both prototypes. Perhaps somewhere down the line a Hannay married an Ashenden and all their children and grandchildren became spies. But Mendel's law has been at work. An almost imperceptible sorting out of genes has gone on. Now there are offspring who are concentrated Hannay, and others who are distilled Ashenden.

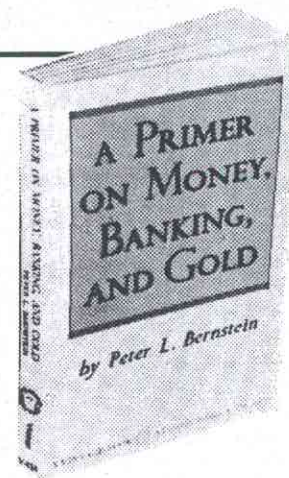
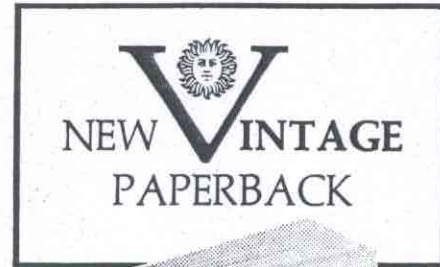
James Bond, Britain's fictional secret agent 007, affects the stylish cynicism of Ashenden, but is really Hannay in a modern sports car. Bond's cynicism is pure snob-appeal and is not even skin-deep. Hannay believed fervently that the world is divided into the good guys and the bad guys. So does Bond. Hannay was constantly up against devilish conspiracies to topple civilization. So is Bond. Bond, the hero of 13 best-selling thrillers published since 1953, was invented by the late Ian Fleming, who wrote Bond's adventures for fun and money and got a lot of both. It probably amused him that during his lifetime intellectuals searched the Bond books for sociological signifi-

cance. The search continues. As it is literally like looking in a coal-black cellar for a black cat that isn't there, not surprisingly it continues to fail. Kingsley Amis, Bond's latest analyst, attributes to Fleming the "huge virtue of never stooping to pretentiousness, of never going in for any kind of arty or symbolical flannel." It all boils down to the Fleming books not being a bore, unlike (Amis says) a lot of non-escapist literature. He proves the point: The only really lively bits of his own book are the frequent pas-

Thrillers for Eggheads

by Alex Campbell

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