

concentrate on the material impact of the revolution, overlooking the immensely important emotional ingredients that came with the pride in regained sovereignty and the elimination of graft and hoodle.

As it was, Castro was firmly convinced by mid-July 1959 that history was moving his way and that his revolution had found the enemy image that it needed. One of the authors sat up all night with Castro listening to him expound his theory that the United States simply *had* to fight his revolution, then rationalize his decision to cancel the promised elections. Faced with such a formidable adversary, he explained, the revolution could not afford the luxury of the democratic process. As we talked in the kitchen of a Havana hotel, an aide handed Castro a news-agency dispatch quoting Admiral Arleigh Burke, then Chief of Naval Operations, as saying that communists are "using" the Premier.

Castro read it, then remarked with visible satisfaction, "You see? They're against us. Every day something new."

## VI

Indeed, the accusations of communism aimed at the revolution with growing frequency from the United States handed Castro a powerful weapon for equating anticommunism with counterrevolution. He developed this theme skillfully in convincing the Cubans that the United States was using the "ghost" of anticommunism to derail the revolution. Cubans were sufficiently enamored of the revolution to accept this simple formula, and the way was open for the liquidation of the moderates and the ultimate victory of the communists.

Here again we encounter the thread of inevitability. If on the one hand the United States government and public opinion could not ignore the emerging importance of communism in Cuba, every warning against communism tended to strengthen this very penetration by the procommunist left. There was no way the United States could win.

Still, it can be argued that if the United States had not helped Castro by putting America in the position of seeming an enemy of the revolution, then the moderates could have tempered the swing to extremism and Castro would have had a far harder time in putting the devil's horns on the United States.

From the beginning, Castro's own relationship to the communists was ambiguous, despite his recent avowal of Marxist-Leninist sympathies. After the 1953 attack on the Army barracks in Santiago, the Communist Party in Cuba dis-

posed 2 years as the only party permitted. When the Castro underground in Havana failed a general strike in April 1954, the communists refused to participate. Having taken part in the Batista cabinet in 1949, they were still supporting the dictator. It was not until late in 1958 that Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, the theorist of the Cuban Party, went up to the Sierra Maestra to confer with Castro. The formal pact between Castro and the communists for their participation in the anti-Batista movement was signed days before the victory of the revolution. In his speech in December 1961, Castro took the occasion to remark that he wished that the revolution could have been made with the communists from the beginning, "as they did in Russia."

It is worth recalling that when Castro entered the mountains in December 1956, Nikita Khrushchev was still a relatively new figure on the world stage and that the bloody age of Stalin still dominated the popular impression of Russia. The Khrushchev policy of aiding wars of "national liberation" was germinating, and the memory of the Hungarian uprising was fresh. Equally important, the United States at that time cast a more pervasive shadow in Latin America. By the time Castro emerged from the mountains, the world had taken a different shape, presenting new possibilities for defying the Yankee giant with the benevolent help of Moscow.

At the same time Castro was surrounded in the Sierra by a group of communist sympathizers, notably Major Ernesto "Che" Guevara. Fidel's brother Raúl commanded a nucleus of communist officers on his "Second Front" in Sierra Cristal. There were reports that Raúl had court-martialed several officers for expressing anticommunist views while others were forced to leave the rebel army. Among those purged was Captain Jorge Solís, the first officer to be commissioned in the mountains from outside Fidel's original invasion force.

William Morgan, the American volunteer who commanded anti-Batista forces in the Sierra Escambray and who was later executed by Castro, told one of the authors that when Major Guevara led his rebel column from the Sierra Maestra across Camagüey and Las Villas provinces, he made a practice of leaving communist officers in every town and village along the way. Morgan and Guevara met in Las Villas, and a battle between them was narrowly averted when the American commander tried to disarm the Argentine.

Until July 1959, direct communist participation in the



revolutionary regime was limited. Castro said later that this was deliberate and unavoidable. But the fact remains that during this period the moderates and anticommunists held considerable power.

At first, Major Guevara was restricted to the command of La Caballa Fortress in Havana; then he was sent on a trip to neutralist nations. The only important extremists in high position were Raúl Castro as commander of the armed forces, Armando Hart, Minister of Education, Major Juan Almeida, the army commander, and Captain Antonio Núñez Jiménez, head of the National Institute of Agrarian Reform.

But, imperceptibly at first, the communists were making progress. Although Castro banned all political parties, the Socialist Popular Party (communist) was allowed to function and to publish its newspaper, *Hoy*. When asked about this inconsistent exception by one of the authors, Castro shrugged and said, "Well, they are not important." Then he added quickly, "But they are in favor of the revolution and you Americans are against it."

An important gain made by the communists during this period was their capture of the Army's G-2 branch, the secret service, which laid the groundwork for their subsequent success. Major Ramiro Valdés, now Minister of Interior and head of all Cuban security forces, was head of G-2 from the first day and his chief deputy was Major "Red Beard" Pinero. Both are Communists.

After the July expulsion of President Urrutia, the extremists began acquiring new positions. Major Guevara returned from his trip to become head of the Industrialization Department of the Agrarian Institute. In fact, he was the chief of the national economy; his rise was an indication of which way Cuba was moving.

## VII

What was perhaps the final turning-point in the leftward swing of the revolution came in October; it marked the virtual extinction of the moderates and had a powerful assist from the United States.

On October 9, Cuba dispatched a note to Washington protesting the flights over the island of clandestine aircraft based in Florida. On October 11, one plane dropped three bombs on a sugar mill in Pinar del Río. Then, on October 22, as Premier Castro drove to the Havana Hilton Hotel to address 2,000 members of the American Society of Travel Agents—a meeting that was partly prompted by a desire

to set Cuban-American relations on a more reasonable footing—Major Diaz Lanz flew a B-25 bomber over Havana, dropping leaflets and, according to the Cubans, several bombs. There were dead and wounded as Cuban troops fired machineguns in a flat trajectory over the city.

The same evening, a crowd armed with anti-American posters marched on the modernistic United States Embassy on Malecón Drive to protest the raid. Castro went on television and charged that the attacking aircraft came from the United States. Once again Castro was handed a perfect pretext for assailing the United States, and again the moderates were dealt a blow. Bitterly they asked how it was that the United States could not control its own airfields. The State Department's lame explanation that it knew nothing about the flight did little to salvage the situation, nor did the strange request by Roy R. Rubottom, Jr., Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, that the Inter-American Peace Commission investigate the clandestine flights.

Coincidentally, on the morning before the raid, Castro had rushed to Camaguey to arrest Major Huber Matos, the military commander of the province, on charges of treason. Matos, who had been one of the leading rebel chiefs in Oriente Province during the war, had resigned from the army in protest against communist infiltration of the military. In a speech to the officers of his garrison before sending in his resignation, Major Matos said that he had repeatedly brought up the subject of communism with Castro, but that despite the Premier's promises, nothing had been done to end infiltration.

The Matos arrest marked Castro's open espousal of the policy of equating anticommunism with treason. At a trial during which Castro acting as prosecutor, delivered a seven-hour speech, Major Matos was sentenced to thirty years in prison.

A purge swiftly followed. Late in November, Castro pruned out the moderates from his cabinet, Major Guevara succeeding the respected Felipe Pazos as president of the National Bank. At this time Manuel Ray resigned as Minister of Public works. During a stormy cabinet session, Education Minister Hart demanded that finance Minister Rulo López Fresquet be sent to La Cabaña and executed. Castro was not prepared to go quite that far, and López Fresquet was allowed to remain in the government, although he lost all power to Major Guevara. A few evenings later, López Fresquet told a friend at home that Castro had become "a



mania, a dictator." But he said he would stay on as minister as long as he could because he felt he might still exercise a modicum of restraining influence.

A few weeks earlier, Major Augusto Martínez Sánchez, a fiery extremist, had become Minister of Labor and played a key role in bringing the Cuban Labor Federation under communist control. David Salvador, president of the Federation, was deprived of real power as two communist leaders, Jesús Soto and José María de la Aguilera, took over effective control.

By now a chorus of attacks on the United States rose daily as government radio stations poured invectives on the Yankee imperialists. The official newspapers ridiculed United States protest notes. Ambassador Bonsal had to wait two months for an appointment with Castro, who later recounted with delight how he had humiliated the envoy by keeping him waiting.

In November the Agrarian Institute seized the cattle land of the King Ranch Company in Canaquey, the first important United States property taken over since the Telephone Company was "intervened" in January. In December the first "counterrevolutionary" trial was held in Pinar del Río with the sentencing of an American pilot and a young Cuban for leading a guerrilla force in Sierra del Organo. The prosecutor and the defense attorney vied with each other in attacks on the United States (but the defense lawyer was soon jailed himself).

In 1959, as "The Year of the Revolution" drew to a close, it was apparent that an abyss had opened between Cuba and the United States. The pulse of events had acquired a rhythm that could no longer be easily altered; the tragedy had to run its quickening collision course.

After ridiculing United States announcements that security measures were being taken to prevent clandestine flights, Castro began talking earnestly about an invasion from the United States. On December 17, he predicted that in 1960 his followers would have "to defend the revolution with weapons at hand." The warning sounded like half prophecy, half wishful-thinking. Although no decision had yet been made by the Eisenhower Administration to organize an invasion, Castro had evidently become aware that such a step was bound to come sooner or later. His sense of history and understanding of revolutionary dynamics made him realize long before Eisenhower himself that there was no other way left but an armed clash.

At year's end, the mood in Cuba recalled the advent of

The *Trotsky* on the French Revolution. The *Castros* were shown the *Castro* as were producing the *masses* into a "revolutionary" army. Four days before Christmas, Castro called on his people to organize a massive informer system, crying, "You men and women must do the job—watch for the counterrevolutionaries." And in the streets of Havana, the chant of "*Par-re-dón, Par-re-dón*" (To the Wall!) sounded like a grim dirge to those who had dared hope the Cuban revolution would elude dictatorial patterns of the past.

## CHAPTER TWO



## THE BEWILDERED GIANT

Draw back the curtain of your memory to December 1958. The concerns of the day, in a generally prosperous and contented America, were with a newspaper strike in New York City, with a scrap in the Senate over the election of Everett McKinley Dirksen as Republican Minority Leader, with what Senator Humphrey had said to Mr. Khrushchev during a eight-hour interview, with a new book entitled *Doctor Zhivago* that had first been published in Italy, and with a rude, hirsute and publicity-fetid group of writers who called themselves Beat.

America then had little direct contact with what J. L. Talmon has called political messianism, that blend of democratic rhetoric, testy nationalism and Popular Front-vintage Marxism rising in hungry corners of the world. Names like Sékou Touré, General Kassem, Patrice Lumumba and Cheddi Jagan, were either unknown or dimly remembered. This lack of contact was especially true for Latin America. In May 1958, Vice President Nixon made his disastrous trip to South America, but after the outrage subsided, so did the concern in Washington. In December 1958, a meeting of the "Committee of Twenty-One" was held in Washington to discuss Operation Pan America, a program urged by the Brazilians after the Nixon debacle in order to unite the hemisphere on a massive development program. When Douglas Dillon, the United States representative, first addressed the Committee he neglected to mention either Brazil or Operation Pan America. The chill was completed when the United States said that it opposed long-term multilateral



programs and favored a piecemeal approach. Washington was not interested in doing too much for its restive neighbors.

For generations, North Americans had been lulled by a kind of Maginot Line psychology about hemisphere relations. The Monroe Doctrine, the inter-American system, the Pan American movement, the Good Neighbor Policy, these terms were like comforting anodynes to an indifferent giant.

Indeed, in all the lofty rhetoric devoted to Pan Americanism, there was little realization that a different political philosophy animated Latin America. The prophet of democracy in North America was John Locke, stout friend of property, stability and limited government. In Latin America the apostle was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the Frenchman who influenced hemisphere rebels from the day of Simón Bolívar. Indeed, much of the American reaction to the Cuban Revolution was like that of the horrified Whigs to the Jacobin terror.

If Marx provided the New Testament to Latin American radicals, it is not too much to say that Rousseau provides the Old. *The Social Contract* asserts: "In order then that the social compact may not be an empty formula it facility includes the undertaking... that whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be compelled to do so by the whole body. This means nothing less than that he will be forced to be free."

"Our will is the general will," announced Rousseau's armed disciple, Robespierre. "They say that terrorism is the resort of despotic government. Is our government then like despotism? Yes, as the sword that flashes in the hand of the hero of liberty is like that with which the satellites of tyranny are armed.... The government of the Revolution is the despotism of liberty against tyranny."

Talk like this puzzles and distresses those who see democracy as a neat system of laws and elections, and when it came from a bearded rebel in Havana the reaction was immediately negative. The United States was about to get a costly education in what a messianic revolution can mean.

## II

In the beginning, as usual, there was confusion.

On New Year's morning, 1959, President Eisenhower was vacationing in Gettysburg when the news came that Fulgencio Batista had fled Cuba. State Department officials were in anxious consultation, trying to figure out what was

going on in Cuba. It was curious but true that the mighty United States knew more about the political ferment in New Delhi or Accra than it did about events on an island "only" 90 miles away from Florida.

Batista didn't fall; he collapsed. His army wasn't really beaten; it was eroded away by corruption, low morale and staggeringly incompetent leadership. But up until the eve of Castro's triumph, State Department officials were mesmerized by the statistics—an army of about 40,000, presumably well-equipped and trained, versus a ragtag guerrilla band, holed in the mountains, that probably never numbered much more than 1,000. Indeed, the day before Batista's flight, a news agency solemnly reported that the Cuban army had "won" the battle of Santa Clara.

United States policy concerning Cuba, such as it was (the late John Foster Dulles was frankly holed by Latin America during his tenure as Secretary of State), was based on the assumption that the army in Cuba would serve as a brake against a swing to the far left. Tentative, and awkward efforts had been made during 1958 to try to persuade President Batista to step aside, but the policy was pursued without much sense of urgency or clear direction. It didn't help that our man in Havana, Ambassador Earl E. T. Smith, a genial amateur diplomat on his first assignment, was several degrees warmer to the Batista regime than the ranking inter-American officials at the State Department.

The embarrassed ambivalence of American policy was especially marked after March 15, 1958, when the United States placed an embargo on the shipment of arms to Cuba—a tacit recognition that a civil war was in process. But at the same time that arms were withheld, a U.S. Military Mission was stationed in Havana, helping to train one side in the civil war. Thus Washington was simultaneously embracing and disengaging from Batista, persuading all sides in Cuba that America was playing a slippery game.

Ambassador Smith, an affable sportsman who knew neither Spanish nor revolutions, did little to clear up the ambiguity. In 1957, when Mr. Smith first came to Cuba, he created a brief sensation by expressing outrage at the brutality of Batista policy in battering women demonstrators in Santiago. But unaccountably, Mr. Smith later came to the conclusion that President Batista was not such a bad fellow after all. In March 1958, he tried to dissuade leaders of the civic resistance in Havana from issuing a statement calling for Batista's resignation. The doctors, lawyers



and Rotary Club members who composed the civic resistance were furious with Mr. Smith's paternal meddling. The Ambassador's view was that an election would clear the whole matter up. Perhaps his advice was responsible for one of Mr. Dulles' rare visits to a Latin American diplomatic reception. The United States Secretary of State appeared at a Cuban embassy reception only two days before a fixed election was held in Cuba, on November 2. The personal appearance of Mr. Dulles, widely reported on the front pages of the Cuban press, was thought to signify American approval of a bayonet-backed vote.

Suddenly, on New Year's morning, the Batista regime blew apart, like a rickety movie set leveled by a hurricane. Unexpectedly, the State Department found itself confronted by Fidel Castro, who was advancing on Havana in a tumult of excitement.

Who was Castro? What did he believe? No one in Washington was quite sure, and the State Department was frankly hoping for the best. There was little else to be done. Once, Department officials had suggested that contact be made with Castro in his Sierra Maestre headquarters; for obscure reasons, the CIA did not see fit to follow through. Indeed, Ambassador Smith frowned on those newsmen who tried to find out what was on Castro's mind by going to see him. An attempt had also been made, earlier in 1958, to put the Department directly in touch with Castro's choice for President, Judge Manuel Urrutia, who was then in exile in New York. The suggestion was politely brushed aside, although the Department did have informal contact with other Castro spokesmen.

Thus, as 1959 began, Washington looked on apprehensively as an absolute stranger took control of an island which North Americans had come to regard as a kind of extra state. Possibly this lack of comprehension helps to explain the sad little playlet in Washington involving an Ambassador's dog.

### III

The dog belonged to Nicolas Arroyo, Batista's envoy to Washington, an architect who was popular with the Capital's social set. Mr. Arroyo was Ambassador until, at 4 a.m. on New Year's morning, Ernesto Belancourt was awakened in Washington by a telephone call. Belancourt, who was then Castro's registered representative in the Capital, heard

the excited voice of a friend in Havana telling him that Batista had taken flight.

By 7 a.m., the Cuban Embassy on 16th Street was in rebel hands. Arroyo was still holidaying in New York when he learned that his government was no more. In accordance with a prepared plan, the Embassy was taken over by the Minister, Emilio Pando, whose sympathies had been with the opposition.

That afternoon, amid quiet celebrations of the tyrant's fall, Arthur Gardner, a former American Ambassador in Havana who held Batista in high esteem, contacted the Embassy on Arroyo's behalf. Could the diplomat reclaim his personal belongings? Pando and Belancourt agreed that his personal effects could be removed, but no official papers or property.

Sometime during the next 48 hours, Belancourt received a call from the State Department. Would Dr. Pando and Dr. Felipe Pazos (perhaps the most eminent Cuban exile living in Washington) come to the Department for a visit? There was hurried speculation among the Cubans. Was the United States going to extend congratulations to victorious insurgents? Was there significance in the call?

Shortly thereafter, Drs. Pando and Pazos went to the State Department where they were greeted by, among others, Roy R. Rubottom, then Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, and Chief of Protocol Wiley Buchanan. But as the meeting developed, the Cubans were made to feel that its primary purpose was to appeal for consideration for the ex-Ambassador, especially to see if something could be done to return Mrs. Arroyo's dresses and the Ambassador's dog.

This was the first official encounter between the agents of a revolutionary regime and the State Department. In Havana, the theme was very much the same. Before Castro arrived in the capital, Havana was under the control of Colonel Ramón Barquin, a gallant democrat who had been imprisoned by Batista for organizing a military coup against the dictatorship. Barquin received two phone calls from Ambassador Smith during the first days of Havana's liberation. The first was a request that Colonel Barquin assure safe exit to Porfirio Rubirosa, the Dominican playboy who was then Trujillo's Ambassador to Batista. The second call was to beseech Colonel Barquin to guarantee the safety of the hundreds of Batistianos who had taken asylum in foreign embassies.

Thus, beginning in January 1959, Cuba and the United



States were like dancers continually stepping on each other's feet, because one partner was attempting a stately waltz while the other was lost in the rhapsody of a cha-cha-cha.

#### IV

"Blood bath," "drumhead justice," "kangaroo courts"—these were the words that blew through the headlines in the next phase of Cuban-American relations. Members of Congress and editorial writers, many of whom had evinced a remarkable stoic detachment about atrocities committed by the Batista dictatorship, were suddenly aroused by the execution of Batista henchmen by revolutionary firing squads.

To the detached outsider, unaware of the deep emotional currents in Cuba, the mass executions were morally repelling and procedurally indefensible. The summary court-martial were based on an assumption of guilt, conducted in an atmosphere of hysteria, and patently aimed at extracting an eye for an eye. To those accustomed to Anglo-Saxon justice, it was repulsive to see a defendant tried in a sports arena. No less distressing was the disregard for double jeopardy; when a group of Batista fliers was absolved by a Havana court, a second trial was ordered and they were conveniently found guilty.

Hence the news that Cuba was beginning a hopeful revolution was lost under an avalanche of headlines on mass executions. On January 12, Senator Wayne Morse deplored the "blood baths" in Cuba; he was joined three days later by Congressman Wayne L. Hays, who was quick to urge a trade embargo against the island, and by Congressman Emanuel Celler, who asked the Administration to "publicly express horror" and have the matter placed before the United Nations.

To Cubans, moderates as well as radicals, the proprietary tone of the congressional lectures was incomprehensible. The "war criminals" had been convicted in the public mind before the trials began—and it was regarded as justice, in the Spanish, Indian and Afro-Cuban sense of cruel justice and deserved bloody retribution. The defendants were members of the Batista police and army, and many if not most had atrocious records of murder and torture against oppositionists. Cubans were amazed that some who were so righteously shocked by trials held under the full glare of publicity had not evinced similar shock during the Batista years. How come, they asked, American Congressmen and editorial writers had not protested against the gouging

of eyes, the cutting of testicles and the slicing of women's breasts in the Batista jails? How come nothing was said when every morning the people of Santiago found their sons, husbands and brothers dead and mutilated in doorways and public squares? Why had the deaths of thousands of persons under the Batista regime been accepted in silence while American tourists gaily flocked to Havana's casinos and nightclubs?

To Castro himself, the criticism was intolerable. On his way to a Rotary Club luncheon, Castro passed through the lobby of the Havana Hilton Hotel. Several reporters, in a bantering mood, needled Castro about the criticism. In an impulsive aside, Castro retorted that "200,000 gringos will die" if the United States should send the Marines—a suggestion that no one was remotely considering.

Thus at the outset the note of hysterical hyperbole was established—a note peculiarly liable to amplification in the megaphone of the press. Reporters were quick to seize the extravagant statement and pump it into a "hard lead" that left the impression that a madman was ranting. But if the reporters were too eager to make a headline, it ought to be added that the bait was planted by Castro himself.

In the first, euphoric days of the revolution, the American press served as a distorting lens. The transfiguring sense of rebirth, the notable civic discipline in Havana, the idealistic fervor of young men suddenly thrust into power—these aspects of the Cuban upheaval did not fit so easily into the wire-service formula of what constitutes news.

Moreover, the very proximity and history of Cuba brought into play a double standard in the United States akin to the anti-Western bias for which the neutralist nations are condemned. Two years later, there was a *coup d'état* in South Korea that brought ferocious young anticommunist military officers into power. There were shootings and jailings in South Korea too, a country in which the United States had more direct political responsibility than it had in Cuba. No one rose in Congress to propose an embargo, and there was little talk about "blood baths" in Korea. The feeling of outrage, on our part as well as among the neutrals, is conditioned to some extent by one's attitude to the political beliefs of the man who is pulling the trigger.

#### V

The American reaction to the mass trials was overdone, coming with special ill-grace from a country that had



evinced a massive disinterest about the plight of the Cuban people under Batista—and that showed similar disinterest about other Latin American peoples under dictatorial regimes. But to be critical is not to engage in excessive self-flagellation. Despite the recriminations, considerable good will toward the Cuban revolution was also evident. When Castro came to the United States on an unofficial visit in April, there seemed to be a chance to repair the damage.

The circumstances of the visit were odd but apt. Castro had been invited by the American Society of Newspaper Editors—throughout, the press has served as the chorus in the tragedy. Although the State Department was caught off balance by the invitation, its spokesmen said that Castro "will assuredly be welcome here." Meanwhile, feelings had been soothed by the exchange of ambassadors that sent Philip Bonsal to Cuba and brought to Washington Dr. Ernesto D'ibigo, a dignified and elderly professor of law who had once had Castro as a pupil.

Reporters were anticipating lively copy; the "Maximum Leader" did not disappoint them. After he emerged from his plane at Washington National Airport on April 15, he broke away from his security guards and charged over to greet 1,500 persons lined against the airport fence. This set the tone for his irregular and direct personal diplomacy.

The day after his arrival, he lunched with Secretary of State Christian Herter, who met the visitor in the lobby of the Statler Hotel, a procedure that was later criticized for its lack of warmth and dignity (President Eisenhower found it convenient to be out of town when the controversial guest arrived). The wariness existed, but Castro went far on April 17 to dispel suspicion. He spoke at the ASNE banquet before an audience that was predominantly skeptical, if not downright hostile. The effect of his eloquence is suggested by Edward T. Folliard's report in the *Washington Post*:

Fidel Castro, Prime Minister of Cuba, wrestled bravely with the English language for 2 hours and 15 minutes before the American Society of Newspaper Editors yesterday. To judge from the applause, he scored a victory in the public relations field....

Prime Minister Castro, a big, broad-shouldered fellow of 32 in an olive green uniform, open at the throat below his beard, and with a star on each shoulder, didn't talk like a Communist or a dictator. He spoke for a free press and for all the other freedoms asso-

APRIL 15, 1961  
The editors were especially impressed by Castro's explicit denial that he was leading a communist revolution and by his explicit statements on freedom of the press. "The first thing dictators do," he affirmed with prophetic accuracy, "is to finish the free press and establish censorship. There is no doubt that the free press is the worst enemy of dictatorship."

During the next days, the era of good feeling continued. He appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and was asked: "What is your connection with communism?" "None," was the reply. After the closed session, Alabama's Senator John Sparkman said that Castro "made a very favorable impression, I'll say frankly." Congressman James G. Fulton of Pennsylvania allowed that he had been "neutral and suspicious" but was now Castro's "nuevo amigo." Florida's Senator George Smathers, esteemed in the upper chamber as something of an expert on Cuban matters, said that he thought Castro personally was a "good man" but had doubts about others in the government.

In this instance, Mr. Smathers had a point. As the American tour continued, with frenetic stopovers at Princeton University, New York City and Harvard University, the applause increased—and so did the telephone calls from Havana. Each night, Cubans who accompanied Castro relate, Brother Raúl was on the phone needing, cajoling, scolding—saying, in effect, "Fidel, are you selling out to the Yankees? That's what people are thinking back home." During his tour, Castro was surrounded by the eminent moderates in his government, men who were known and respected in Washington. But none of these figures had the personal link to Castro that the sharing of mutual hardship forges. His moderate advisers were for the most part bearded; the procommunist wing of the revolution, exemplified by brother Raúl and "Ché" Guevara, had a hold on part of Fidel's being; they had fought together as soldiers in the Sierra, where common peril made strangers into brothers, if not comrades.

Thus, when Castro was in Canada, Raúl urged him to cut his trip short and arrange a meeting in Houston, Texas. Cuban-based guerrilla forces were active in the Caribbean, and the first outcries against the Castro revolution's export policies could be heard. Fidel assented; the voice from the



mountains, then as later, prevailed over the calm arguments of the moderates.

## VI

Was there really a chance, during the April visit, for the United States to make itself a partner in the Cuban revolution? The possibility has tantalized from the moment Cuban-American relations sank into the maelstrom. Even President Kennedy is on record as wondering whether "Castro would have taken a more rational course had the United States not backed the dictator Batista so long and so uncritically, and had it given the fiery young rebel a warmer welcome in his hour of triumph, especially on his trip to this country..." (*Strategy of Peace*, 1960). Mr. Kennedy confessed that he was not sure; his hesitation is shared by many liberal-minded Americans.

No one can know for certain what might have happened if... still, it does seem plausible to contend that there was no real chance for a settlement, even if the United States had tried to clasp Castro to its bosom. Whether or not Castro was telling the truth when he said on December 2, 1961, that he had deliberately disguised his radical views during the formative period of his revolution, his temperament and ambition were such that a real accommodation with his government was never very likely.

Those who saw Castro at short range during his American trip retain vivid mental snapshots of the "Maximum Leader." His was the carriage of a proud, vain, stubborn, and endlessly ambitious leader. Whether he was squatting on his haunches in an intense debate, or whether he was solemnly expounding his views to high-school students in front of the Embassy, he accepted an attentive audience as his due. He could speak with the patient eloquence of a teacher, but the premise invariably was that only the listener had anything to learn. For a leader who continually stressed that his revolution was for the humble, he showed an imperious lack of humility in deciding what the humble ought to want.

Thus the first trait that made any settlement unlikely was pride. Castro was all too familiar with the pattern of past Cuban history, in which a new *caudillo* would certify his claim to power by concluding a deal with American proconsuls in Cuba and by making a pilgrimage to Washington, with its attendant rewards for good behavior. "It is possible," Fidel said to the newspaper editors, "many

people here we were coming here for rewards. I wish to tell you that we did not come for rewards. You should not think of our country as a beggar."

Castro invited his subordinates to ask for no immediate aid, but his advisers did discuss possible aid programs in a general way with U.S. officials. The tone of the conversations was cautious but optimistic. Minister of Finance Rulfo López Fresquet assured Americans that the revolution was taking a hopeful course and that existing friction could be ameliorated. Felipe Pazos, head of the National Bank, explained that Castro was still in the "Moncada Barracks" phase of economic thinking. First, Pazos contended, Castro tried to unseat Batista by a wild, frontal attack on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago in 1953—then he went to the Sierra Maestra for a longer, more patient siege. "Castro is still attacking economic problems the way he attacked Moncada," Pazos said. "We're hoping that he will go into the Sierra soon."

There was pride, fierce ambition and the gulf between a radical leader in the messianic tradition and a stand-pat Administration that was afraid to take a chance in dealing with a controversial fellow. Unlike Great Britain, which had been tutored generations ago by the Irish, the United States was not used to dealing with rebels in a nearby country that Washington comfortably regarded as part of its "back yard." And whatever tragic flaws Castro possessed, his driving sense of social justice was authentic. If he had been merely an *ersatz* idealist, his regime would have been in the Peronista tradition—strong on words, weak on deeds. Precisely because Castro was able to communicate the sincerity of his concern he became a hero to the humble from Argentina to Mexico. If Castro had been wholly a villainous cynic, there would be no tragedy in the tale that we are trying to relate.

Whether Castro, at the time of his visit, was a communist is a moot point. But the evidence suggests that he didn't know what he was, except that he was a radical revolutionary—notwithstanding his subsequent hints that all along his road was clear. Vice President Nixon has reportedly taken credit for prescience in writing a memorandum, after his lunch with Castro, asserting that the Cuban was either a Party member or hopelessly naive about communism. But curiously, the same day that Castro dined with Nixon, he returned to the Cuban Embassy and woke several of his aides who were sleeping on the third floor. He was excited and voluble. According to those present, he



said he was worried about two threats to the Cuban revolution—that it would be discredited by the mass executions or by communist infiltration. Possibly his concern was genuine. A few days later, Castro dispatched "Ché" Guevara on a goodwill mission to the neutralist world, thus taking from Cuba the shrewdest of the left-wing intellectuals in his guerrilla group. And, upon his return to Cuba, the executions stopped. In any event, the true facts will remain stuff for debate for years to come.

## VII

During the next months, there was a breathing space, interrupted by spasms of controversy. Fidel Castro fortified the impression in Washington that he was well-intentioned but headstrong when he made a flying visit to an economic conference in Buenos Aires and proposed that the United States grant Latin America \$30 billion over a ten-year period. (The figure was dismissed as preposterous, but two years later Washington itself was talking about a decade-long program involving \$20 billion in U.S. aid, loans for international agencies, private investment and help from Europe.)

If the countries had been given a chance to relax, possibly relations might have normalized. But there were determined groups doing their best to bring out the worst in leaders of both countries. In Cuba, as we have seen, there was an implacably anti-American wing of the Castro regime; at the other extreme were the Batistianos who had fled to Florida and who were in a strategic position to roll the waters.

There was an almost dialectical relationship between the antithetical positions. Each needed the other to keep alive the sense of crisis. To consolidate their hold on Cuba, and on Castro, the Jacobins on the left needed to play upon popular passions by building up the counterrevolutionary threat. For their part, the Batista exiles were keenly aware that their only hope for returning to Cuba lay in an act of intervention by the United States. Both factions, for their own reasons, were intent upon prying apart Castro's Cuba and Eisenhower's America; history testifies to their success.

The various controversies over the clandestine flights, the Díaz Lanz testimony and the agrarian reform have already been outlined. Strangely, just as in the Katanga controversy in December 1961, Senators James O. Eastland and Thomas J. Dodd demonstrated how two legislators can help undercut official policy. Both used the Senate Internal Se-

curity Subcommittee as a kind of free-lance foreign office by extending status and recognition to Castro's foes, of whatever stripe.

Caught in the middle were the impotent moderates. Ambassador Dhibgo, in Washington, spoke privately to one of the authors in tones of chagrin and dismay. He recalled that his Embassy had tipped off the Cuban desk of the State Department that there were rumors about a B-25 that had been mysteriously sold in the Southwest and was waiting to be flown in a Florida airfield. The tip came to nothing and the plane was later flown by Major Díaz Lanz in his October raid on Havana. Ambassador Dhibgo said that it was difficult to explain to his government why Cuba could not even purchase a trainer jet from the United States because of an arms embargo placed on the United States by Washington. How, he asked, can the young rebels in Havana understand why the United States neither prevents the clandestine flights nor permits Cuba to buy planes to defend itself?

Equally baffled was another well-meaning moderate, President Eisenhower. Asked at his October 28 news conference what he thought was "eating" Fidel Castro, the President replied:

I have no—no idea of discussing possible motivations of a man, what he is really doing, and certainly I am not qualified to go into such abstruse and difficult subjects as that. I do feel this: Here is a country that you believe, on the basis of our history, would be one of our real friends. . . . It would seem to make a puzzling matter to figure just exactly why the Cubans would now be, and the Cuban government, would be so unhappy, when, after all, their principal market is right here . . . I don't know exactly what the difficulty is.

Thus the "Year of the Revolution," which had begun with timid expressions of hope, ended in a spree of confiscations, angry diplomatic notes and splenic threats. In the Cuban view, as it was assiduously shaped by Castro propaganda, the United States was sheltering Batista "war criminals," allowing bombing attacks on Cuba, and threatening to wreck the agrarian reform. Seen from North America, the Cubans were irrationally angry about small things—i.e. clandestine flights—and dangerously blind about big things—i.e.



the menace of communism and the need properly to compensate expropriated land-owners.

A stream of protest notes was directed at Havana concerning land seizures. On October 14, a "firm and gentle" note was sent advising Cuba to avert an impending crisis. "If Fidel Castro takes time out to read the note," reported Edwin A. Lahey of the *Chicago Daily News*, "he will get the clear implication that Cuba will get rough treatment from Congress next year unless it begins some serious talks with the State Department on the problems of American sugar and other properties in Cuba."

On November 29, Castro received further paternal advice from Senator Allen J. Ellender, chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee and a warm admirer of the Trujillo regime in the Dominican Republic. Mr. Ellender said simply that Congress might retaliate against Cuban confiscation by slashing the island's share of the United States sugar market. The ground was being seeded for the next phase of Cuban-American relations during "The Year of the Agrarian Reform."

#### CHAPTER THREE



### CRUCIBLE OF REVOLT

With the advent of the New Year in Cuba—the second year of the revolution—Cuban-American relations were charting a sharp downward line on the graph. But not quite a straight line: in the first three or four months of 1960, Fidel Castro alternated smiles and frowns at the United States. It was as if the Premier were deliberately trying to create the impression of systematic persecution by the United States in disregard of Cuba's offers to improve relations.

Even if Castro were really sincere in his protestations that he wished to arrive at an accommodation with Washington—and his own words subsequently suggested that this was never his intent—the momentum of deterioration was too swift to be stopped.

Once again, the United States abetted Castro's maneuvers by failing to halt the constant flights from Florida by light aircraft dropping bombs and incendiary devices on Cuba's

sugar fields just as the harvest was beginning. Castro was thus able to claim that the United States was responding to his overtures with acts of aggression tolerated by officials in Washington.

Why did the United States display such impotent incompetence in blocking the flights? Why was corrective legal action so tardy? The answer is not easy to find; the flights were a profound disservice to Washington and had the grievous effect of turning the Cuban people against the United States, an objective that Castro presumably had in mind.

Indeed, the flights were so useful to Castro that there is evidence that the Havana regime arranged some of the flights deliberately as a way of discrediting the United States as an aggressor. An investigation by the Department of Justice and a Federal Grand Jury in Miami in April 1960 produced evidence that several Cuban agents, including a consul in Miami, had unexplained contacts with certain free-lance American fliers. Conclusive evidence of "auto-aggression" was never really obtained; those who could tell the full story were either dead or otherwise unable to talk. But the circumstantial evidence is impressive.

On February 19, a plane exploded in the air over the Española sugar mills in Las Villas Province. Its pilot, an American named Robert Ellis Frost, was killed. This was followed on March 22 by a more intriguing incident when Cuban troops near Matanzas shot down a plane carrying two Americans, William L. Schergales and Howard Rundquist. An American vice-consul in Havana somehow succeeded in visiting Schergales at the Matanzas Hospital, where the pilot was being held, and obtained from him what the State Department described as an affidavit that he had been paid by the Cuban regime to make the flight. Schergales named Juan Orta, head of Dr. Castro's Executive Office, as the man who arranged the flight. Although the United States Government repeatedly asked for the extradition of Schergales and Rundquist for trial in Miami after their indictment by the Grand Jury, no reply was ever given. The fliers had vanished in Cuba. Orta, who broke with Castro early in 1961, is in asylum in the Venezuelan Embassy in Havana and, at the time of this writing, cannot shed any light on the strange episode.

However, even without these incidents, Cuban-American relations were worsening by the day. Late in January, Washington recalled Ambassador Bonsal from Havana in