

Castro, Key To New Cuba

(The author of the following article is associate editor of the Times-Review, weekly paper of the la Crosse diocese. This is the last in a series of articles he has written after completing a two-week, fact-finding tour of Cuba.)

By PATRICK J. WHELAN
N.C.W.C. News Service

"The success of the revolution depends on Fidel Castro," a Cuban businessman in Havana told me.

"But it can go bad from his mistakes, or from his bad intentions," he added.

Yet this man expressed confidence that Cuba will eventually reach new heights of progress and freedom under the Castro regime.

One thing nearly everyone admits about Castro is this: He is sincere and he is honest.

"If he makes a mistake, it's an honest one. If he realizes it, he will correct it," is apparent by a general consensus.

But isn't there danger, asked, that Castro will eventually become a dictator in order to achieve his goals, — especially if progress is too slow to suit him?

"Yes, there is that danger. But I don't think Castro will ever become a dictator like his predecessors.

"Why? Because he has spent many years criticizing and fighting dictatorship.

"Besides, he is a man who wants to be loved by the people. He is also conscious of history. He will do nothing to compromise the people's attachment to him, or to forfeit his good name in history.

"He wants history to record him as the second liberator of Cuba, as Jose Marti was the first," the Havana acquaintance said.

A group of Cubans convinced me that the majority of Cubans have faith in Castro, and in his ability to deliver on his promises.

One Cuban expressed that faith in these words:

"Look around you. You see freedom on every side. People talk, discuss, argue, do what they want.

"Look at their faces. They're a happy people. It wasn't like that during the dictatorship. No one smiled. You saw no one in the streets or in the plazas after six o'clock.

"Today," he added, "laborers and campesinos are willing to work hard for a new deal. They do it with the conviction that now there's hope for them."

Castro himself seems to believe that democracy expresses itself best in "public opinion." He has proved he is a creator of that opinion and that he is sensitive to it.

Early in his rebel career, he said: "No arms, no force can conquer a people determined to struggle for its rights."

"My only preoccupation is public opinion . . . because it is the most decisive and powerful factor of the revolution," he declared later.

On the other hand, Castro has also demonstrated that he is not a mere pawn of public opinion. He has repeatedly made urgent calls for sacrifice from the people — from the middle class, the laborers, the campesinos or farm workers. He has warned that Cubans must "tighten their belts," perhaps for several years, in order to achieve a more diversified economy and to end Cuba's dependence on the U.S. for export of its main crop, sugar.

Of his emotional tendencies, Castro himself admitted last February:

"I grow impatient when . . . I think of the homes we can build for the campesinos . . . of the schools we need for our children; and when I think that the most elemental plan to achieve a task requires a week of study . . ."

Allied to his impatient zeal, Castro also demonstrates the traits of a reformer, and even of a messiah. On various occasions his words indicated that he was "fated" to save Cuba.

For example, in an interview, he said: "What preoccupies me is not what I may be now — but how am I going to do what I have to do for Cuba, and how will I fill the role which has fallen to me."

Cubans generally admit — and this includes clergy and prelates — that the moral atmosphere of Havana changed on the heels of Castro's arrival in January. They now comment on the near absence of petty thievery, of public drunkenness, of open prostitution, of ostentatious living.

But more important, even Castro's enemies testify to the rigorous honesty of the government, at all levels. Gone are the days when money — surreptitiously or openly passed from one hand to another — could buy favors of public servants, or when officials could enrich themselves at the public trough.

An almost puritanical spirit of rigid adherence to honesty and hard work pervades the offices of government. Many officials have a look of penitential overwork about them and a determination to carry through despite obstacles and long hours.

Trying to judge the philo-

stists called for a "government of national unity."

Castro blandly ignored both the threat and the appeal.

Meanwhile, the Reds continue to proclaim their zeal for the Castro program — in a continuous effort to identify their party with the revolution. Their failure is reflected in the 5,000 circulation of their daily newspaper, Hoy.

Castro's most conspicuous talent is his oratorical skill, which he demonstrated the three times that I heard him.

He commands his voice and his body movements with the precision of an actor, and the heady effect of a demagogue.

When I mentioned these traits to a friend in Havana, he replied:

"Yes, he talks like a demagogue. But people here are used to that form of oratory. They expect it. It is necessary to put over a point."

Castro's long discourses range over many subjects, but they return to the main theme repeatedly. They give the impression of random, unorganized thought. But a careful reading of them afterwards reveals a serious purpose in every apparent tangent.

Sometimes he repeats phrases in boring monotony — apparently to make the ideas sink into the consciousness of a people that can do little reading.

But the sentences that filled me with boredom aroused resounding cheers and claps from his willing audiences.

Will Castro be able to manage his revolution? Will he finally bring true representative government to his people? Will his apparent naivete regarding communists be his downfall?

I find it difficult to judge without more time to observe. But perhaps Castro wrote his own judgment for posterity, when he declared:

"The final historic worth of the men of the revolution depends on the work which they realize."

Fr. Noonan Niagara Head Dies At 67

Germantown — (NO) — Solemn Requiem Mass was offered at St. Vincent's Seminary for Father Joseph M. Noonan, C.M., former president of Niagara University, Niagara Falls, N.Y.

Father Noonan died (Sept. 20) at Divine Redeemer Hospital, Meadowbrook, Pa., after a lengthy illness. He was 67.

At the time of his death the Vincentian educator was director of studies for the eastern province of the Vincentian Fathers and a member of the provincial council.

He served as president of Niagara University from 1932 to 1947. He also served at various times during his career as president of the seminary department, National Catholic Educational Association, and president of the Association of Colleges and Universities of the State of New York.

Jesuit Quarterly
Orford — (RNS) — First issue of a new Jesuit quarterly devoted to philosophy and theology will appear in this country in January, it was announced.

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copy that guides the revolutionary leader is a hard task. His outlook seems to be a strictly practical one — based on a deeply felt emotional drive for social justice.

A priest said: "Castro's teachings are neutral. They could be used by the right or by the left."

Like many educators of the past generation or two, Castro also testifies to a solid faith in the rewards of education. Perhaps that explains his insistence on informing the peoples of the precarious state of Cuba's finances soon after the revolution's triumph.

The person who described Castro as a "confused young man" explained: "He is influenced by Marxist thinking, but also by good social doctrine. He does not know where one ends and the other begins."

Perhaps that judgment explains why Castro in one breath defended the dignity of women and attacked discrimination against them, and in the next upheld their right to carry a gun into battle.

His notions of freedom betray a tendency to exaggerate the rights of individuals. For example, he declared in public:

"Write as you please, discuss as you please — because man is intelligent, not imposition."

On another occasion, he said, "The idealistic-philosophical theory is the one that gives to man every freedom, and besides appertains to him the satisfactions of a material order."

And yet, time and again, Castro reverts to the notion of duty to fellow citizens, and of sacrifice for the country.

Evidence of his sincere conviction is that Cuba today has no "iron curtain" of dictatorship, no secret prison cells, no political tortures chambers. Castro even banned the police uniform of the Batista era, so that people might forget the terror of those days.

The freedom of the communists to organize, to open offices, and to publish newspapers is an aspect of Cuban life criticized most by the U.S. press.

Castro voiced his own opinion of communists on several occasions. Once he said, "Extremists have no place in the Cuban revolution."

Yet, he explained that terrorism and persecution of opposition groups, like that practiced by the Batista regime, have been so revolting that he will not infringe even on the rights of communists as long as they do not oppose the principles and progress of the revolution. He defended his position thus: "Those who talk of democracy should begin by knowing what respect for all ideas consists of, what freedom and the rights of all consist of."

But Castro has not yet made the mistake of taking the communists into partnership with his regime — as Batista did. Last May, Red party chief Blas Roca made a thinly-veiled threat to break the "revolutionary solidarity" which will be fatal to the advance of the revolution.

Later, after Castro's tactical resignation in July, the commu-

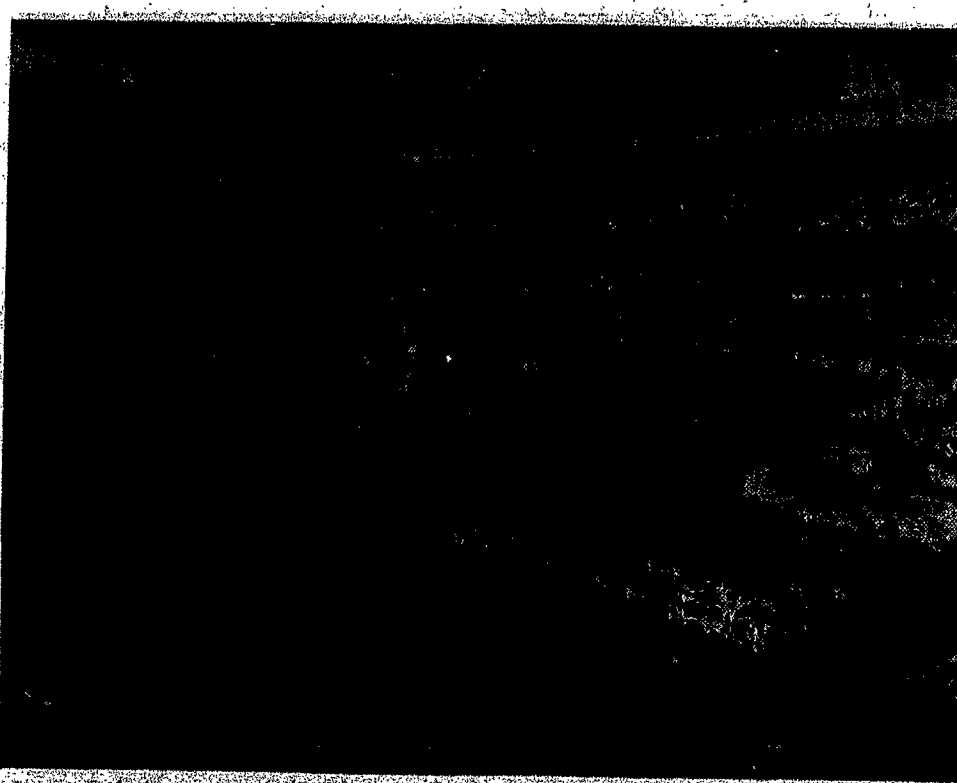
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Polo Grounds Becomes Sanctuary

New York — (RNS) — As a Polo Grounds crowd of 50,000 watches, boys and girls from Catholic high schools form a living rosary during the 17th annual rally sponsored by the New York Archdiocese Union of the Holy Name Society. Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York, presided at the rally which had as its theme "Living by the Ten Commandments." The youths promised to conduct themselves in keeping with the precepts of the Decalogue.

Charities Plan Meet In Milwaukee

Milwaukee — (NC) — The 19, the two organizations will be "Catholic Charities Accepts annual meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Charities and the Conference of Catholic Charities will be held in conjunction with the national meeting of the St. Vincent de Paul Society from October 10 to 21. Each day will begin with a general meeting. Workshops on youth in modern society. The questions related to the general theme of the second day will be:

Discourage Divorce Try

St. Paul — (RNS) — A plea for state laws that would impose a cooling-off period before a divorce action could begin was made in the sermon at the annual Twin Cities' Red Mass for judges and lawyers.

Religious-minded lawyers have a "duty" to seek such laws, which would require the court to work for the reconciliation of the parties seeking a divorce, said Msgr. Francis J. Gilligan, pastor of St. Mark's Catholic church, St. Paul.

MSGR. GILLIGAN, former professor of moral theology at St. Paul seminary, also called on lawyers to discourage specific divorce actions.

While a lawyer can refuse to have anything to do with persons seeking divorces, "the more Christian approach" is to spend time trying to reconcile the parties, the priest declared.

"In some extraordinary instances when all efforts for reconciliation have failed, and when property rights need protection, it may be permissible to use the existing formalities of civil law to give protection to an innocent party with the understanding that only a civil statute has been changed."



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